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# MEMOIRS

OF

# JAMES MONTGOMERY,

BY

*John Holland and James Everitt.*

VOL. II.

*Wath-upon-Dearne*
*Yorkshire.*

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN & LONGMANS,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

# MEMOIRS

OF

# THE LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

# JAMES MONTGOMERY,

INCLUDING

SELECTIONS FROM HIS CORRESPONDENCE, REMAINS IN PROSE AND VERSE, AND CONVERSATIONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY

JOHN HOLLAND AND JAMES EVERETT.

VOL. II.

"There is a living spirit in the lyre,
A breath of music and a soul of fire;
It speaks a language to the world unknown;
It speaks that language to the bard alone."

*World before the Flood.*

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# MEMOIRS

OF

# THE LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF

# JAMES MONTGOMERY.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### 1800—1801.

STATE OF ENGLISH POETRY AT THE CLOSE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. — MONTGOMERY WRITES AN ADDRESS FOR THE THEATRE. — MRS. SIDDONS. — NEW FEATURE OF THE "IRIS." — SERIES OF PARAGRAPHS ON THE AFFAIRS OF SWITZERLAND. — EPITAPH "ON EDWIN AND EMMA," AND "ON A YOUTH." — THE "SUFFERING PEASANT," BY IGNATIUS MONTGOMERY. — LOCAL DISTRESS. — A "FRAGMENT."

THE last year of the eighteenth century devolved upon political journalists the painful duty of describing, and upon government and benevolent individuals the more important obligation of mitigating, the evils of a general scarcity of food. The popular apprehension of famine, however, did not quench the poetical ardour of Montgomery and others, who were destined to adorn that golden age of verse which extended through the ensuing thirty years, and had already more than dawned —indeed, two of the bards, who specially distinguished it, Rogers and Campbell, had already published their masterpieces of song. But while the sober sweetness

of the "Pleasures of Memory," and the animating charm of the "Pleasures of Hope," were a delightful prelude to that improved style which the tender but unaffected genius of Cowper had in a great measure suggested; and although Wordsworth's striking "Lyrical Ballads," and Southey's startling "six weeks' epic," "Joan of Arc," alike gave earnest of a disregard of formal precedent, the prouder names of Scott and Byron had not yet appeared in connection with the earliest of those original works through which they ultimately attained so unprecedented a degree of popularity, and, as a consequence, exercised so large an influence on the metrical literature of the country.

Montgomery himself has divided modern English literature into three periods. The first era he defines as that extending from the time of Queen Elizabeth to the close of the Protectorate: the second era, from Dryden to Cowper, whose death occurred in the course of this year: while from Cowper he deduces the commencement of the third great era, in which he and his numerous contemporaries so strikingly figured. "Cowper's first volume, partly from the grave character of the longer pieces, and the purposely rugged, rambling, slipshod versification, was long neglected, till the 'Task,' the noblest effort of his muse, composed under the inspiration of cheerfulness, hope, and love, unbosoming the whole soul of his affections, intelligence, and piety, at once made our countrymen feel that neither the genius of poetry had fled from our isle, nor had the heart for it died in the breasts of the inhabitants. The 'Task' was the first long poem from the close of Churchill's brilliant but evanescent career that awoke wonder, sympathy, and delight, by its own ineffable excellence, among the reading people of England. The 'happy miracle of that rare birth' could not fail to quicken

many a drooping mind, which, without such a present evidence both of genuine song and the genuine effects of song, amidst the previous apathy to this species of literature, would hardly have ventured to brood over its own conceptions in solitude and obscurity, till they too were warmed into life, uttered voices, put forth wings, and took their flight up to the 'highest heaven of invention.'"* Montgomery has doubtless here described—whether intentionally or not—the influences which moulded his own genius, especially at this period; for although he had not yet entirely freed himself from the temptation to imitate the "ludicrous eccentricities of Peter Pindar," there are many evidences of the dawn of that chaste and original style by which he was subsequently distinguished, even in the "Prison Amusements," and still more so in some of those exquisite lyric compositions to which we shall presently have occasion to advert.

The following Address was written by Montgomery, and spoken at the Sheffield theatre, April 7th, on occasion of the performance of the "Jew," for the benefit of the poor, by the gentlemen of the Thespian Society:—

"In dark mid-winter's melancholy reign,
When desolation scowls along the plain,
When the wild spirit of the gloomy north
Unchains his storms, and bids them sally forth;
Fierce as the mad barbarian clans of yore,
O'er the soft south the angry demons pour,
Deflower the seasons in their rash career,
And blast the glory of the British year,
Till streams in icy sleep forget to flow,
And nature seems a wilderness of snow;
Then from the grove, on shivering wings, repair
The poor unsheltered wanderers of air;

* Lectures on Poetry, p. 368.

Round man's sweet home the little suppliants throng,
And claim a pittance for their summer song.—
No hand so cruel, and no heart so cold,
That claim to spurn—that pittance to withhold.

"If thus the fowls of heaven you deign to bless,
Shall human sufferings move your bowels less?
Shall humbled poverty in dust complain?
And dumb affliction look her wants in vain?
Ah, no — while pale and terrible at hand,
The spectre famine threatens through the land,
Where'er the sons of sorrow mourn, you fly
With ardent bosom, and consoling eye,
The hungry feed, the fallen raise, and shed
The oil of gladness o'er the fainting head!

"Go on — like gracious heaven your gifts bestow,
Let every fountain of compassion flow;
Pure as the light the tide of comfort run,
Broad as the day, and bounteous as the sun!"

This was the fourth and last Address which Montgomery wrote for the theatre, the amusements and tendency of which he henceforth discountenanced on principle; not, of course, because he was either insensible to the powers of our great dramatic writers, or that he wanted the taste to relish superior acting. In the year before this, when the celebrated "Tragic Queen" appeared on the stage at Sheffield, the editor of the "Iris" observed, "Were it in our power to add one leaf to the laurels that flourish round her brows, we should be proud of the opportunity; but our feeble pen cannot serve Mrs. Siddons." On another occasion, and in a livelier mood, the poet introduced the following rhyming compliment, as a parenthesis, into the first copy of a Fable which we have seen:—

"As when majestic Siddons woos,
In thrilling tones, the Tragic Muse;

Like guardian sylphs around the fair,
The hovering Passions swim in air;
The powers that sway, at her controul,
The tide of feeling in the soul:
The ghastly family of Fears,
The tender sisterhood of Tears,
Ambition, Vengeance, Frenzy, Hate,
Watch her keen eye,— the eye of Fate!
She frowns like Jove, in awful pride;
She loves, like Juno when a bride:
The Boxes droop, as beds of flowers
Charged with the weight of thunder showers;
The Pit assumes a sterner form,
Moved like the forest in a storm;
While Gallery critics look so wise,
They seem to listen with their eyes."

In the early part of this year, Montgomery announced his intention of introducing a novel feature into his newspaper: —

"The editor of the 'Iris' proposes in future to sketch a recapitulation of the principal events and most plausible rumours of the week. It shall be his study to render this article, in point of style, as simple, brief, and comprehensible as possible. How far the plan, which he does not recollect to have been attempted in any other newspaper, may gratify the public, he has no other means of proving than by trying the experiment. Confident of its utility, under the management of a judicious compiler — doubtful of his own capacity to execute the office with precision and propriety, he submits it with hesitation to the candour of the public, whose opinion shall be decisive of its fate."

This recapitulation consisted usually of about a dozen little paragraphs, in the composition of which he excelled.* These were generally pointed, often witty,

* It was with the management of a *corps d'esprit* of this kind

Round man's sweet home the little suppliants throng,
And claim a pittance for their summer song.—
No hand so cruel, and no heart so cold,
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This recapitulation consisted usually of about a dozen little paragraphs, in the composition of which he excelled.* These were generally pointed, often witty,

* It was with the management of a *corps d'esprit* of this kind

and occasionally very spirited. They were well calculated to interest political small-talkers, by enabling them to retail the news of the week without the labour, even where they had the ability, of selecting or epitomising for themselves. As specimens of the style of these articles, and as steps that led eventually to an important development of Montgomery's poetical character, we here give the commencement of the series relative to Helvetic affairs, which attracted and excited so much the attention of Europe at this period:—

"*Switzerland*, once the chosen haunt of liberty, the 'Mountain Nymph,' is again in the pangs of a new revolution."—*April* 25.

"Bonaparte extinguished the revolution in *Switzerland* as soon as it was lighted, by declaring that he would recognise no other authority there but that of the executive commission."—*May* 8.

"The passage of Bonaparte with his army and artillery over the Great St. Bernard, was an astonishing example of persevering enterprise, and worthy of the all-daring genius of a man who would scale the battlements of the moon to gather a leaf of laurel."—*June* 12.

"He (the chief consul) has again revolutionised *Switzerland* with the breath of his nostrils: one bubble of a constitution broke at his command; another rose in a moment at his word, and will glitter or perish at his pleasure."—*August* 28.

"The Cisalpine and Helvetic republics have just received from the first maker at Paris, a pair of new constitutions of the latest fashion; but as they are too fine to be worn on the work-days of war, they are laid by for the sabbath of peace."—*September* 18.

that he was principally intrusted, under Mr. Gales, who used to exclaim, "What beautiful little paragraphs yon young man writes!"

In a letter to Aston, dated July 17., he says: —

"What think you of politics? The Seven Wonders of the World, long ago dead and buried, have surely risen from their graves, and, under new forms, are astonishing mankind. I would rather have been led by you over the rocks of Kinderscout, than by Bonaparte over Mount St. Gothard. The glory of a conqueror is more my abhorrence than my envy: I would not wear a laurel dipt in blood. But surely the pause of carnage is now arrived. May the war either die utterly, or sink into a state of suspended animation! and cursed be the man that uses the means recommended by the *Inhumane* Society to revive the powerless monster!"

Few readers of English verse are unacquainted with Mallet's affecting ballad of "Edwin and Emma," though the fact that it was founded on a local tradition that two persons, each about twenty years of age, really "died of love," under circumstances analogous to those described by the poet, has been much less generally known. In the present year a project was entertained for erecting a monument in memory of the "faithful pair," in the churchyard of Bowes, in Yorkshire, where they were buried; and Montgomery, on being applied to by Mr. E. Newstead, composed the following epitaph, which, however, was never used, as the design of a memorial was, for some reason, abandoned.*

* This "labour of love" was ultimately performed in a zealous and appropriate manner by Dr. Dinsdale, of Leamington, who, in 1849, published an edition of Mallet's ballad with notes and illustrations; and also placed at the west end of the church at Bowes a tablet with the following inscription, which is a verbatim copy of the entry in the burial register of the parish:—"Rodger Wrightson, junr., and Martha Railton, both of Bowes, buried in one grave. He died in a fever, and upon tolling his passing bell she cried out, 'My heart is broke,' and in a few hours expired, purely through love, March 15. 17$\frac{14}{15}$."

"Here dust to dust, to ashes ashes laid,
Sleep the cold relics of a youth and maid,
Whom Love, too exquisite, condemned to feel
Those bosom-pangs, which Death alone can heal:
Death came;—and weeping as he struck their doom,
Sealed an eternal marriage in the tomb:
While Mallet scattered o'er their bridal biers
Sweet flowers of verse, for ever fresh with tears.
Hence parents learn, that hearts to love awake,
Must beat together, or together break!
Hence Youth be warned, nor prove, like them, too late,
Love's arrows, winged with hope, are barbed with fate.

"Sheffield, Sept. 16. 1800."

This epitaph is the earliest *dated* specimen of a class of compositions to which Montgomery added more than any poet of his age—with what success, the reader will ultimately be enabled to judge. They were, in every instance, involuntary exercises of his ingenuity—Did any poet ever write an epitaph otherwise?—concessions to importunities often urgent in the inverse ratio of any claim to gratification. Few of his mortuary inscriptions give a more perfect example of these "monitory rhymes" than the following:—

"*On a Youth of Fifteen.*

"Here sleeps in peace a lovely youth:
What was his praise?—he loved the truth.
He feared not death:—what hope had he?—
Hope full of immortality.
Reader, thy day of grace is *now*;
What praise is thine? what hope hast thou?"

The reader will probably not be displeased with the following verses,—the production of Ignatius Montgomery, the younger brother of our poet. They appeared in the "Iris" in November this year, with the

signature of "I. Y."; which would never lead to an identification of the author. They belong to the "old school" of English rhyme:—

"*The Suffering Peasant.*

"To toils accustomed, but by griefs worn down,
The meagre victim of sad want I see;
Nor broken limb, nor age's wrinkled frown,
Demands yon crutch, that bears his misery.

"Poor friendless wretch!—or if a friend he knows,
That friend, like him, must beg what pity gives:—
Poor friendless wretch! half clothed in rags he goes,
And all in sickness, scarce in hope, he lives.

"Each trembling limb to pampered ease would cry
A death to all enjoyment, and the orb
Of mental day, so late meridian high,
In black despondency's wild wave absorb.

"Yet cheerless, he must grieve and feel the sting
Of inward pining, oft the marked disdain
Of kindred equals borne on fortune's wing,
And racked disease, and slow consuming pain.

"That man, unbroken, in the flush of morn
I knew: a vigorous stem, whose strength sustained
A lovely tendril, blooming like the thorn,
While in its shade a soft companion reigned.

"He never longed for cumbrous wealth; his care,
His aim, the duty household wants require,
His pleasure Home, the soft enjoyments there
Were all he sought to fan his humble fire.

"Lamented fate! his peace for ever flown,
O! ask not how—for see through all the land
The sordid demon hearts, whom softer stone
Would grudge to own, or link in kindred band.

"Where, once, at eve, the cottage smoke was seen
Slow winding in a column through the vale,
One fragment chimney, clothed in mossy green,
In solitary sadness tells the tale.

"He reared the cottage now in ruins laid,
His hands were all the implements employed,
And long-earned profits from his busy spade
Were spent in stock, and for a cow beside.

"He chose a mate whose steady worth he knew,
And she their equal likeness soon returned;
Long time to duty and each other true,
They lived content, nor aught disastrous mourne

"But ah, too glowing was their bliss to last!
The big-charged cloud of deep affliction rose,
And poured a torrent through oppression's blast,
That left no vestige but the poor man's woes.

"His cow was driven from the fenceless heath,
The rich enclose where still the poor have right;
It robbed his means, it sunk his soul beneath,
Though still he hoped, and shut his boding sight.

"His infant missed the customed beverage mild,
And cherished pining appetite in vain.
It fell diseased—his hope, his darling child:—
The mother grieved with inward fatal pain.

"The shelf no more with weekly savings rung,
The little stock already there, was drained;
The kettle seldom o'er the embers sung,
Their health was waning while their wants remained.

"The harvest proved what greedy pilferers call
A scanty crop, and bread grew scarce and dear:
This closed the scene, obscured his prospects all,
And stretched his famished partner on a bier.

"Thus have I seen the bounteous Spring array,
Too soon some luckless firstling of the flock,
When wayward Winter, yet ungorged with prey,
Hath laid it cold along the herbless rock."

The local distress which had marked the beginning of 1800, continued to its close; and one dark night in December, two thousand people assembled in a field, just outside the town of Sheffield, "to consider the distress arising from the high price of provisions." It may well be supposed the proceedings of such a meeting would afford sufficient materials for aggravating comments to an editor who was disposed so to use them. But Montgomery had not only been taught to be cautious "through suffering;" but he conscientiously felt and acknowledged the duty of rather furthering the practical measures taken to mitigate the immediate pressure of local suffering, than to speculate on its remote causes. Hence he zealously advocated and otherwise liberally aided the public subscription which was set a-foot in the town; and such was the amount of money raised, and such the destitution of the inhabitants, that in March, 1801, upwards of ten thousand persons thankfully partook of this casual local charity.

Without date, but apparently written about this time, we find the following lines, entitled—

"*A Fragment.*

"When Contemplation's mournful eye is cast
O'er the dim wilderness of ages past,
Time's hoary ruins, scattered round the scene,
Stretch their broad shadows o'er the wastes between;
Wastes,—where proud nations, once the heirs of fame,
Lie low in dust, extinguished even in name;
Ruins,—where prouder states, with madness fired,

In vain to Immortality aspired.—
They perished, and the wrecks they left behind
Record the crimes and sufferings of mankind.
I sing those ruins. Time! thy course renew,
And make the past the present to my view:—
A sudden whirlwind mingles earth and skies,
The ruins tremble, and the dead arise!
Along the valley of departed years,
A melancholy multitude appears;
Like half-remembered dreams the shadows swim,
In twilight vision, venerably dim.
They pass; high o'er the undistinguished throng,
The giant ghost of Babel towers along;
In hieroglyphic majesty sublime,
Old Egypt frowns, the eldest-born of Time;
Pale through the gloom the tribes of Israel rise,
Like the sweet Pleiades in wintry skies;
Voluptuous Persia glimmers in the storm,
A feeble, lingering, evanescent form;
Greece, like resplendent Pallas, springs to light,
A martial maiden, beautiful and bright;
Carthage, a gaunt and sullen spectre, mocks
The north-wind with her seaweed-woven locks;
In stern defiance, lowering round the tomb,
Glares the fierce spirit of Imperial Rome;
Black in the rear Barbarian clans came forth,
Wild as the trumpets of their native north;
They rush to battle.—Darkness o'er my head
Breaks like the Day of Judgment!—All is fled!"

# CHAP. XXIV.

## 1801—1803.

"HANNAH"—MONTGOMERY EXTENDS HIS POETICAL CLAIMS.—ADOPTS THE SIGNATURE OF "ALCÆUS."—THE "LYRE."—BLANK VERSE.—THE "POETICAL REGISTER," AND THE "ANNUAL REVIEW."—DR. AIKIN.—THE PEACE OF AMIENS.—LETTERS TO ASTON AND TO MONTGOMERY.—THE "PILLOW," THE "THUNDER STORM," AND THE "JOY OF GRIEF."—CHATTERTON.—POLITICAL PARAGRAPHS.—ORIGIN OF THE "WANDERER OF SWITZERLAND."

In the "Iris" of August 29. appeared—but without any signature—a poem with the title, "Sacred to the Memory of Her who is dead to Me." This piece, which was much admired for its taste and tenderness, and for the strong impress it bore of more than a fictitious significance, was not generally identified with the name, much less interpreted as part of the history of Montgomery, till it was reprinted under its present well known title of "Hannah," in the first edition of the "Wanderer of Switzerland."* The name, at least, as we have already intimated, was that of a person well known to the poet during his residence at Wath: and it is not likely that he would so long afterwards have thus formally and feelingly have embodied such a remembrance of one of the fair sex, had he merely regarded her with a passing admiration, in

* In the "Athenæum" (Feb. 1807, p. 166.), Dr. Aikin published ten stanzas from his own pen under the title of the "Sequel to Hannah:" they do not, however, even by reflection, exhibit any of the interest of Montgomery's tender verses.

common with the rest of the village maidens to whom he became known. On the other hand, we have no evidence that there existed anything like an avowed or mutually recognised attachment between the parties: assuredly the verses, sweet and suggestive as they are, must not be taken as a circumstantial history in detail. Frequently, indeed, amidst that unfettered freedom of social intercourse which our beloved friend permitted us to indulge, we have adverted to "Hannah," and have sometimes won from him a response, more or less intelligible, on the subject; but nothing more: nor were other persons commonly more successful.*

To one valued friend, who inquired directly and formally, the poet tendered an explanation, which drew from that friend the following remarks:—

"Your story of the real Hannah, though not quite so conformable to the poetical one as I had imagined, is romantic and interesting. I cannot blame you for making no

* Hannah Turner, the undoubted heroine of the poem, was, as we have elsewhere stated, the daughter of a respectable yeoman, who lived at Swathe Hall, near Barnsley, and was, during Montgomery's sojourn at Wath, a frequent visitor at that pleasant village. About the period of the date of the poem, May 26., she was married at Wath to Mr. William Mansell, a gamekeeper of the Duke of Rutland, at Belvoir Castle, but whose residence was at the neighbouring village of Woolsthorpe. Mansell died suddenly at Bumper Castle, in Yorkshire, August 13. 1811, and was buried at Hornby, near Thirsk. His wife, who was near her confinement at the time, on hearing of the death of her husband, presently gave birth to a son,—who, we believe, now fills the situation formerly held by his father,—and in three or four days afterwards she died, and was buried at Woolsthorpe. Montgomery never saw "Hannah" but once, or at most twice, after he came to reside in Sheffield. In August 1846, Mr. Holland mentioned the facts stated in this note to the poet, who assented to their correctness; at the same time expressing his surprise at the "dryasdust curiosity" which had evoked them.

bolder efforts to 'marry her to your despair,' and I am glad that your heart received no incurable wound from the disappointment. But why should you now play the faint-hearted lover? I should not suppose that within the sphere of your acquaintance there is any female that would be disposed to look upon Mr. Montgomery with disdain; and if the sweetest of all social ties is your serious object, why should you lose time, and run the hazard of another failure? But I venture not to touch more closely upon a topic round which you have thrown the veil of mystery."

Ignatius Montgomery once said to Mr. Everett, "I have repeatedly sounded my brother about 'Hannah,' but I never could learn anything more than the verses themselves reveal."

In the course of this year, Montgomery ventured to extend those poetical claims which had hitherto been confined almost entirely to the readers of his own newspaper, or to the limited circulation of "Prison Amusements." The genuineness and originality of his talents were not only apparent to his friends, but were recognised by strangers: he invested vigorous and fanciful, as well as tender and pathetic thoughts, in a chasteness of diction, and adorned them with a smoothness of versification, which showed how thoroughly he appreciated and understood those treasures of admirable English verse, which he was even now beginning to enlarge. "We cannot expect," said he, at this period, to an amateur in rhyme, "in every poetical effusion, to meet with 'the thoughts that breathe, and words that burn:' but to recommend common ideas, there is required a most delicate and indefinable charm of expression, resembling the exquisite bloom on ripe fruit, newly plucked, which is even more delightful to the eye than the pulp to the palate. This magic felicity of language, is that which, like the

cestus of Venus, converts homeliness into beauty, and without which beauty itself appears homely."

Having adopted the elegant and appropriate signature of "ALCÆUS,"* he transcribed the "Remonstrance to Winter," the "Lyre,"† and the "Battle of Alex-

* We believe it was rather from the euphony of this name than from anything like a fancied resemblance between his own writings or character and those of the Greek poet, that Montgomery adopted it. Alcæus was the contemporary, countryman, and, according to some accounts, also a favoured admirer of the poetess Sappho, who flourished B.C. 610. He is described by the ancients as a warrior, a patriot, a lover of books, and a poet; being commended in the latter character for the union of "magnificence with brevity, of sweetness with consummate strength of expression, of the use of figure and metaphor with perspicuity."—*Bland's Anthology* (Merivale's edit.), p. 28.

† It is worthy of notice that the first sketch of this poem, one of the most admired of Montgomery's earlier lyrics, was composed in blank verse—his only recorded attempt of that kind before the composition of the "Pelican Island." The fragment exists in the author's handwriting: the poetical student, at least, will be glad to have an opportunity of comparing it with the highly finished stanzas ultimately given to the public:—

"The weary moon was wandering through the sky,
An angry sky, deformed with hideous clouds,
That rode tempestuous on the northern blast.
Forth from his mournful dwelling strayed a youth,
Whom brave Ambition in the spring of life
Had worn away into a wintry shadow.
Down the drear valley, by a haunted stream,
That moaned along its melancholy channel,
He took his way. A pale mysterious gloom
Eclipsed the dawning lustre of his eye,
And shed untimely twilight o'er his features.
Light on his arm a lyre suspended hung;
And oft he paused to wipe the twinkling tear
That dimmed his path, and ease his painful bosom
Of the big sigh, that would not be repressed.

"On the bleak summit of an awful rock
Whose shadow hooded o'er a sullen lake,

andria," from the "Iris," and sent them to the editor of the "Poetical Register." These pieces were decidedly among the best in the volume*, and not only

An ancient oak in hoary grandeur rose,
Which rooted firm as Nature on her centre,
Broad to the winds displayed its giant arms,
And bade them spend their idle indignation.
The youth ascended. In the trunk, which time
Had hollowed, with that slow and secret hand,
Which crumbles nations, and unthrones their kings,
He chose his seat; and tuned his magic harp
To the rough music of the wilderness,
The dashing waters and the yelling winds!
A pitch of dreadful harmony that well
Accorded with the tenor of his soul.
He raised his voice—a voice so sweetly wild,
He touched his lyre—a lyre so finely strung,
That darkness, all enamoured of the strain,
Relaxed his brow, and softened into smiles:
The savage tempest, charmed to silence, closed
By soft degrees his undulating wings:
Bright broke the moon between the sailing clouds,
And poured a tide of splendour down the valley,
While Echo, startled from her tranquil dream,
Pursued the flying notes from hill to hill.
And thus he sang:—

"'O, lyre my dear companion!
Repose for ever on the friendly bough
Of this romantic oak, beneath whose shade,
Thy music oft, at peep of early morn,
In noon's resplendent hour, at eventide,
And by the smiling moon's delicious beams,
Hath sweetly warbled down the listening valley.
Fled is the golden age of infancy,
When, first my sportive fingers wooed thy strings,
And tempted wild notes from thee; fled the days
When, bolder grown, my boyish hand essayed
A strain sublimer, struck thy awful chords
With such determined fury, that the sounds'"——

* Volume I. for 1801, but not published till 1802.

excited considerable attention, but as one of them was dated from "Sheffield," the authorship was also, in some degree, indicated. Dr. Aikin, at this period a man of considerable influence in the circles of criticism, and as a dispenser of literary honours, was much pleased with these poems; and in the "Annual Revi[illegible]" of which he was editor, thus notices "Alcæu[illegible] whose real name he was, as yet, unacquai[illegible] "One very spirited poem, entitled the 'Battle [illegible] andria,' and signed 'Alcæus,' we perused wit[illegible] pleasure, and are sorry that its length precl[illegible] selection. Another piece, with the same signa[illegible] shall give as a very flattering specimen of the[illegible] Then follows "Remonstrance to Winter."

This was, we believe, the first instance o[illegible] gomery's compositions being noticed by a reviewer: and to have seen one of them thus selected as "*a very flattering specimen*" of the contents of a work comprising so many pieces of undeniable poetical merit, must have been an incident at least as gratifying to the poet as it was honourable to the critic.

The new year opened amidst conflicting hopes and fears, occasioned by that ominous pause in the great European struggle, called the "Peace of Amiens," and which hardly lasted longer than the period which elapsed between the signing of the preliminaries and the publication in London of the so-called "definitive treaty." Pending the issue of this hollow truce, Montgomery reiterated his favourite watch-words, "Peace! Peace!" evidently with more confidence in the desirableness than the prospect of a realisation of his hopes. Nor did he affect to impeach the good faith of either the government or the people of Great Britain in their profession of pacific senti-

ments; while constantly recurring indications of the restless ambition of Bonaparte augured a speedy termination to the neutral policy of the threatened nations. On these topics the "paragraphs" in the "Iris" occasionally assumed the length and character of ordinary "leaders."

The following letter, which seems to have puzzled the person to whom it was addressed, by the writer's reiterated sighs over a deep "rooted sorrow," will be perfectly understood by those who know what it is to "minister to a mind diseased" with a malady that admits but of one effectual remedy — the "balm of Gilead."

*James Montgomery to Joseph Aston.*

"Sheffield, March 8. 1807.

"My dear Friend,

". . . . I cannot be an entertaining correspondent; and I am determined never to attempt it again: in future, as hitherto, I will dip my pen in my heart, and pour out the feelings of the moment. Since I saw you at Sheffield, I have experienced some severe conflicts of mind. I believe my last letter, in answer to your inestimable favour, was gloomy. It set in clouds and darkness; a long night of silence ensued, and the morning of the present effusion is not likely to be more cheerful than the evening of the last. If any part of that letter gave you uneasiness, I most sincerely and deeply regret it. The affectionate and consoling letter which you wrote in reply lies before me. I have been reading it again, as I had done many times before, with renewed and yet unsatisfied interest. You say 'A person cannot help believing what he does believe, so that if we do our duty, by inquiring what is truth? in a conscientious manner, it can be of but little consequence, whether we believe accurately or not in all the minutiæ of religion.' My dear friend, there is danger of misapprehending this doctrine. . . . We may think that we are seeking truth when we are wilfully and perseveringly embracing error. The Christian religion seems to me

to require such a childlike simplicity, such purity of heart, and singleness of mind, that when I contemplate it calmly, I despair of ever approaching its standard. It is hard to renounce the world, and all those pleasures which the world deems not only innocent, but useful and commendable; and yet, methinks that Christianity requires the sacrifice of them. For my own part, I cannot, at present, take up my cross and follow the despised and rejected Man of Sorrows through poverty, reproach, and tribulation: and yet — you will say it is a strange confession — I carry a heavier cross and bear a deeper ignominy in my own upbraiding conscience: I feel the Christian's sufferings without the Christian's hope of that eternal weight of glory which shall reward them. My mind is not deeply laden with crimes; but unbelief — an unbelief from which I cannot deliver myself — hangs heavy on my heart, and outweighs all those little joys, for which I am unwilling to relinquish the world. I am sometimes sunk in such deplorable despondency, that I feel all the pangs of a victim, under sentence of eternal damnation, without that salutary conviction of the reality of my danger, which might compel me to flee from the wrath to come. But I am not always thus, though I have been more so lately than usual, occasioned by a circumstance which I shall presently explain. Sometimes a cheering ray of hope — of Christian hope — breaks through the pagan darkness of my mind, and opens heaven to my desiring view. O, then, my friend, how does my heart expand, my soul aspire! . . . Do not be frightened at this picture of your friend: it is faithful, but is drawn in an hour of bitterness; and if I had delayed until to-morrow, I might have sketched a picture more pleasing, yet not more faithful. I have some good qualities — a warm heart, a weak head, a most despotic imagination. . . . Some cruel disappointments in life, which have preyed, and will continue to prey upon my heart, have aggravated my natural melancholy. The education I received, independently of all these, has for ever incapacitated me from being contented and happy under any other form of religion than that which I imbibed with my mother's milk: at the

same time, my restless and imaginative mind and my wild and ungovernable imagination have long ago broken loose from the anchor of faith, and have been driven, the sport of winds and waves, over an ocean of doubts, round which every coast is defended with the rocks of despair that forbid me to enter the harbour in view." [He then describes, at great length, how an old workman of his, after having lain seven weeks ill in bed, got up unobserved in a moment of delirium—walked into the river—and perished!] "I never in my life was more shaken through every nerve of my system; and am not yet recovered from the stupefaction into which I was thrown by this awful event. Forgive me, then, if this should prove an unwelcome letter, for I am sure it will torture your affectionate heart. But I must conclude.

"I am, most sincerely and affectionately,

"Your faithful friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. Aston, Manchester."

The following letter is equally creditable to the writer and to the receiver:—

*Joseph Gales to James Montgomery.*

"Raleigh, May 7. 1802.

"DEAR MONTGOMERY,

"I am glad to hear from you, what I have all along trusted was the case, from what they have hinted, and what I have heard from others, that my sisters are doing pretty well. Accept, my good friend, of my most cordial thanks for your friendly attentions to them. Be to them still, as you have in some good degree been, a *brother* in my stead who am lost to them. And also suffer me to entreat you—though I am satisfied entreaty is unnecessary—to continue to show kindness to the good old folks, my aged parents. I fear they have suffered greatly on my account. O, that I could soothe and comfort them as they sink into the grave! But this is denied me: O, do it for me, my dear Montgomery, as you have opportunity!

"The number which you inform me you print of the 'Iris' is small: but I observe a respectable number of advertisements, which, together with your other printing business, I trust, will not only enable you to live comfortably, but that when you get the millstone [borrowed capital] removed, you will be able to acquire a competency for the solace of advanced years. So far from thinking the 'Iris' 'stupid,' I think you show a great portion of spirit, tempered with that prudence without which no paper can long be printed in England.

"And now let me request you to do what I omitted to charge my sisters with—to make my kind remembrances to all my friends, whom you know better than I do—because *you have seen them tried.*

"Yours sincerely,

"JOSEPH GALES.

"Mr. James Montgomery, Sheffield, England."

Three or four little poems, each of them in his best vein, were printed in the "Iris" this year, viz., the "Pillow*," the "Thunder Storm †," and the "Joy of Grief," a title taken from Ossian.‡ The much admired little poem first named, was certainly not read with less interest because it was known to be, in fact, the poet's description of himself. It has been very justly said, that "the question, whether the man, concerning whom a biographical work is written, was ever in love, is an important feature in his history, if any light can be thrown upon it."§ As elucidatory of this question in reference to Montgomery, we may

* Works, p. 268. † Ibid. p. 271.

‡ Ibid. p. 266. There is in the British Museum a composition in MS. by the old poet Gascoigne, entitled the "Grief of Joy;" it is supposed to be the identical copy which was presented to Queen Elizabeth by the author of the "Princely Pleasures of Kenilworth," during her Majesty's visit to that place.—AMOS's *Trial of Somerset*, p. 535.

§ Burton's Life of Hume, vol. i. p. 231.

perhaps have little besides poetical evidence to offer — proof sufficient at this time, that his affections, as well as his spirit, were deeply exercised, "seeking rest and finding none." The verses on "Hannah," for example, may be read as a response to the following invocation of the "Pillow:" —

> "Yet other secret griefs had he,
> O, Pillow! only told to thee:
> Say, did not hopeless love intrude
> On his poor bosom's solitude?
> Perhaps on thy soft lap reclined,
> In dreams the cruel Fair was kind,
> That more intensely he might know
> The bitterness of waking woe."

The few graceful stanzas, entitled "Chatterton,"* though they may recal, cannot fairly be compared with Coleridge's more elaborate "Monody" on the death of the "Marvellous Boy," except that both poets may perhaps be said to have owed much of their sympathetic sensibility for the fate of genius in another, to the concurrent sadness of their own minds: but each expresses himself in character — Montgomery, in lamenting the fate of the "Rash Minstrel," moralises his song; Coleridge, with more ardour, and no less sincerity, suspends his strain, "lest kindred woes persuade a kindred doom" — promising also, to raise a solemn cenotaph to the memory of the minstrel, "where Susquehannah pours her untamed stream." Poor Chatterton! the mystery of his genius is hardly yet unveiled.

We resume the series of paragraphs relative to Switzerland, the unprovoked attack on which, by the French, was denounced alike for its infamy and its

* Works, p. 293.

impolicy by many persons in England, who had not been cold in their admiration of the revolutionary government. Sir James Mackintosh indignantly declared, that "the invasion and destruction of Switzerland was an act in comparison with which all the deeds of rapine and blood perpetrated in the world are innocence itself."*

"The Diet of Berne, which has been sitting for many months to hatch a new constitution for Switzerland, has been suddenly frightened from its nest, and its eggs broken about its ears. The former legislative authorities have resumed the exercise of their functions."—*November* 19. 1801.

"Among the numerous petty states overwhelmed by the deluge of the French revolution, every friend of human happiness would rejoice to see the mountains of Switzerland emerging from the subsiding waves, and the simple ark of its ancient constitution resting on their heights. It would be worthy of the magnanimity of Bonaparte to restore to the poor natives their quiet independence."—*February* 4. 1802.

"Switzerland is convulsed with factions. Her neighbours threaten to declare war against her to preserve the peace of Europe; — and war *in the end* is an infallible peace-maker." —*June* 10. 1802.

"It is understood that our government have determined to remonstrate against the interference of France: and even to call upon the continental powers to second their efforts to conciliate their difference with Switzerland."—*October* 21. 1802.

"The Swiss patriots have answered the Proclamation of Bonaparte in a tone worthy of their ancestors. They avow that they have no other object in view than 'the right which Switzerland claims of giving herself a central and

* Defence of Peltier.

cantonal constitution, suited to her situation and necessities, —a sacred right, which the Chief Consul himself guaranteed to her by the treaty of Luneville.' They attribute all the miseries of their country to the members of the Helvetic government, 'obscure metaphysicians, who had obstinately attached themselves to theories as erroneous as they were expensive.' There is more of courtly *finesse* than of republican simplicity in the following paragraph; and perhaps it was the delicate address of this passage that conquered Bonaparte. 'General First Consul, all Europe admires in you the supreme head of an immense empire, which without doubt, under your influence, will be directed to the good of humanity: your magnanimity assures us, that you will not exercise YOUR POWER against a people, who only desire WHAT YOU HAVE MADE THEM TO HOPE, and who only wish what they believe themselves *authorised to do by yourself!*' We have only to add on this subject, that Bonaparte has consented to receive deputies from all the cantons of Switzerland, to form, under his eye, a constitution for their country.'' —*November* 4. 1802.

"Citizen Hauterive, the renowned arithmetician, is preparing a new constitution for the Swiss. In compliment to the consuls, he is doing it by the 'Rule of Three.'"—*December* 9. 1802.

*James Montgomery to Joseph Aston.*

"Sheffield, Jan. 30. 1803.

"The cause which you assign for your unfrequent visits to Sheffield, on paper, gives me sincere and cordial pleasure. The prospect of competence, honourably obtained, is one of the most delightful visions of futurity, on this side of that futurity which will soon be present and never be past. I congratulate you on the prospect of success in your new business, and still more in the earnest it has given you in the last year: may you increase in wealth and grow in happiness! I have little hope for myself of either the one or the other: I have too little industry ever to obtain wealth, and too much ingratitude towards Providence for the blessings which I daily receive, ever to secure happiness. Shall

I confess to you that I have not an object of desire or pursuit in the world?—I mean, of inextinguishable desire, and unceasing pursuit: the clouds that vary with the wind are more stable than my hopes, and more substantial than my enjoyments; sometimes the cares of business perplex, and sometimes the profits of business stimulate me to exertion. I dream of fame and immortality in this world; and I spurn the ideas of both as unworthy of a being destined to immortality in another world. Thus am I tossed from wave to wave, and squander away life and liberty and peace, without benefit to myself or advantage to others. . . . . I should indeed like to pay a visit to Manchester, and the Moravian settlement at Fairfield, in the neighbourhood: there are some there who were my companions for many years at school, and some who have been my teachers. But I can spare very little time from home—I steal a few days once a year to visit Fulneck, where I was educated; the dearest place to me on earth!"

To conclude the paragraphs relative to Switzerland:—

"In his letter to the Swiss deputies, Bonaparte demands an entire sacrifice of all their factious and selfish passions, and in the same breath he sets them a noble example of disinterested moderation, by peremptorily declaring that he will not permit the establishment of any government in the cantons, which *may be* hostile to his own, for Switzerland must in future be '*the open frontier of France!*' He had previously converted the Pays de Vaud into '*a highway*' between his dominions; and we may already anticipate his seizure of the dykes of Holland to supply his table with frogs."—*January* 13. 1803.

"Bonaparte has pronounced his *fiat* concerning Switzerland: a constitution has been recommended to the Helvetic Consulta, and embraced by them with becoming humility. It was received, discussed, and adopted in a day. Since

that time a deputation has been despatched to Paris, from the cantons, to beseech the First Consul to inclose 'the open frontier of France,' and annex it to the integrity of the 'Great Nation.' Why does not Bonaparte at once pass a general inclosure bill, and take in all the waste lands in Europe,—has he not a common right to them all?"—*January* 20. 1803.

"The heart of Switzerland is broken! and liberty has been driven from the only sanctuary which she found on the continent. But the unconquered and unconquerable offspring of Tell, disdaining to die slaves in the land where they were born free, are emigrating to America. There, in some region remote and romantic, where solitude has never seen the face of man, nor silence been startled by his voice since the hour of creation, may the illustrious exiles find another Switzerland, another country rendered dear by the presence of liberty! But even there, amidst mountains more awful, and forests more sombre than his own, when the echoes of the wilderness shall be awakened by the enchantment of that song, which no Swiss in a foreign clime ever heard, without fondly recalling the land of his nativity, and weeping with affection,—how will the heart of the exile be wrung with home sickness! and, O! what a sickness of heart must that be which arises not from 'hope delayed,' but from hope extinguished—yet *remembered!*" —*February* 17. 1803.

The foregoing citations—the records of passing events at the time when they were written—have long since become history: and the intensity of a contemporary sympathy felt with the parties immediately concerned has yielded to the calm interest of a general retrospect of the issues of the conflict. But even at this day, few persons of strong sensibility will fail to be affected by a perusal of the last of these brief articles, in which, while the writer, with a glow of enthusiasm, a tender and

romantic pathos, bewails the expiration of liberty in the land where she had been cradled, adored, and defended for centuries, anticipates the song of the exile, and brings before our imagination the expatriated Switzer, and his dishonoured and forsaken birth-place,—"the land of the mountain, the vale, and the flood."

But there are some who will not have failed to discover, in the above concentrated sentiments, something of the spirit and even the poetry of the "Wanderer of Switzerland;" and who will be gratified to learn that in the interest excited by the above paragraph originated that celebrated poem. "I wrote that article," said Montgomery to Mr. Holland, "with the utmost feeling and sincerity; for I sympathised with the Switzers from my very soul!" He uttered these words with a violence of emotion that seemed to resuscitate his original sensations on the subject. "I reflected especially," he added, "upon the mournful interest with which the exiled patriot would hear and sing his favourite '*Ranz des vaches*,' in a foreign land. Among others, my friend, Mr. Rhodes, was exceedingly pleased with what I had said, and when we next met, he observed, that the fate of Switzerland would be an interesting subject for a poem; and pressed me to undertake it. 'Well,' I replied, 'I will make a ballad of it.'"

Montgomery immediately commenced the composition of his poem: his whole soul was presently absorbed by his subject. An undertaking which was expected to end in producing only a ballad, became a more serious affair, and terminated in a production which was to become the foundation of the future fame of the author. Mr. Rhodes not only suggested the subject, but encouraged the poet in his task, and ac-

celerated, by his persuasions, the publication of the poem; for so little did Montgomery himself calculate upon the immediate and subsequent celebrity of his work, that almost three years were suffered to elapse between the date of the above paragraph and the appearance of the "Wanderer of Switzerland."

excited considerable attention, but as one of them was dated from "Sheffield," the authorship was also, in some degree, indicated. Dr. Aikin, at this period a man of considerable influence in the circles of criticism, and as a dispenser of literary honours, was much pleased with these poems; and in the "Annual R[illegible]" of which he was editor, thus notices "Alcæ[illegible] whose real name he was, as yet, unacqua[illegible] "One very spirited poem, entitled the 'Battle [illegible] andria,' and signed 'Alcæus,' we perused wi[illegible] pleasure, and are sorry that its length prec[illegible] selection. Another piece, with the same sign[illegible] shall give as a very flattering specimen of th[illegible] Then follows "Remonstrance to Winter."

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The new year opened amidst conflicting hopes and fears, occasioned by that ominous pause in the great European struggle, called the "Peace of Amiens," and which hardly lasted longer than the period which elapsed between the signing of the preliminaries and the publication in London of the so-called "definitive treaty." Pending the issue of this hollow truce, Montgomery reiterated his favourite watch-words, "Peace! Peace!" evidently with more confidence in the desirableness than the prospect of a realisation of his hopes. Nor did he affect to impeach the good faith of either the government or the people of Great Britain in their profession of pacific senti-

ments; while constantly recurring indications of the restless ambition of Bonaparte augured a speedy termination to the neutral policy of the threatened nations. On these topics the "paragraphs" in the "Iris" occasionally assumed the length and character of ordinary "leaders."

The following letter, which seems to have puzzled the person to whom it was addressed, by the writer's reiterated sighs over a deep "rooted sorrow," will be perfectly understood by those who know what it is to "minister to a mind diseased" with a malady that admits but of one effectual remedy — the "balm of Gilead."

*James Montgomery to Joseph Aston.*

"Sheffield, March 8. 1807.

"My dear Friend,

". . . . I cannot be an entertaining correspondent; and I am determined never to attempt it again: in future, as hitherto, I will dip my pen in my heart, and pour out the feelings of the moment. Since I saw you at Sheffield, I have experienced some severe conflicts of mind. I believe my last letter, in answer to your inestimable favour, was gloomy. It set in clouds and darkness; a long night of silence ensued, and the morning of the present effusion is not likely to be more cheerful than the evening of the last. If any part of that letter gave you uneasiness, I most sincerely and deeply regret it. The affectionate and consoling letter which you wrote in reply lies before me. I have been reading it again, as I had done many times before, with renewed and yet unsatisfied interest. You say 'A person cannot help believing what he does believe, so that if we do our duty, by inquiring what is truth? in a conscientious manner, it can be of but little consequence, whether we believe accurately or not in all the minutiæ of religion.' My dear friend, there is danger of misapprehending this doctrine. . . . We may think that we are seeking truth when we are wilfully and perseveringly embracing error. The Christian religion seems to me

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probable that towards the latter end of the tenth century of the present war (a period of calamity which trust we shall never live to see) this invincib. actually be ready for sailing, provided the F. can invent a pickle for preserving their fir. otherwise they will as quickly decay as they a pleted, and the armament which is to carry B the vengeance and the destinies of France u of Britain, will never consist of more than *one building and the other rotting.*"—*Iris, Se*

In another paper, after mentioning the c which the French had been observed to ma flat-bottomed boats, &c., he says:—

"Every soldier is loaded with his accoutren visions for three days, which will probably be will want as long as he lives if he has the succeed in landing on our shores."—*Nov.* 3.

Again —

"A corps of guides and interpreters, who u...stand our roads and our language, are forming in Paris, for the accommodation of the army of England. May the interpreters speak the jargon of Babel and confound our enemies with their tongues! May the guides be 'blind leaders of the blind,' and may they 'both fall into the ditch' between Calais and Dover!"—*Nov.* 10.

The following is a still more amusing specimen of that peculiar felicity with which the editor of the "Iris" adapted whimsical similes to the discountenancing of absurd rumours:—

"After confessing the failure of the insurrection which they had attempted to excite in France last week, the editors of the * * * * gravely subjoin '*We are not without hopes, however, that this report is but the forerunner of* SOME GREAT AND MOMENTOUS REALITY!' And so indeed it may be; for we recollect having read in a child's halfpenny book, adorned

with appropriate cuts, the '*History of a great King and a little Fly*,' which, though not much to the purpose, for the lack of better matter we shall relate, with the assurance that it is far more interesting and nearly as authentic as the best news of the past week. Should the reader find it too long, he may omit any part without in the slightest degree injuring the truth of the whole.—As the great king ran to crush the little fly, he trod on the tail of the cat; away flew the cat and took vengeance on the nose of the dog; the dog, as he reasonably might, ran mad and bit the goose; the goose, being out of her senses (if she ever had any), was devoured by the eagle, and the eagle, feeling himself poisoned by the goose, fell upon an apple tree to cool his stomach; every apple that he touched went mad—an unlucky old woman made a pie of them. The moment it was drawn from the oven, the king, whose horse had run away with him in hunting, being stung by a fly (the very brother of that which he had killed) alighted at the old woman's door. Seeing a hot apple pie on the table, his majesty sat down, ate heartily, and died! Thus was the unjust death of a little fly '*the forerunner of a great and momentous reality.*'"—*Sept.* 8. 1803.

From the playful character of these extracts, it is not to be inferred that Montgomery thought lightly of the necessity of England being prepared to repel an actual aggression on our shores. He had, however, then and ever, a strong dislike of falsehood or misrepresentation, and no less in political than in personal concerns: hence his lack of sympathy was almost as apparent with regard to many of those who were constantly crying "Wolf! Wolf!" as towards others who would seemingly have been rather glad to welcome than repel the spoiler. Should any one, after all, think that the editor of the "Iris" was, considering the peril of the country in 1803, *too little* of an alarmist, we do not deny—probably *he* would not

have denied—that our national safety may have in some degree depended upon the conduct of those who had *too much* of that spirit.

He did not publish any poem of considerable length during this year; indeed, apart from politics, he was mainly occupied on his "Wanderer of Switzerland," and with the revision of his "Loss of the Locks." Notwithstanding, as we have observed, he discountenanced the violent and absurd rumours, that an enemy without a fleet was just ready to enter our ports; yet, lover of peace as he was, he voluntarily endeavoured, by the inspiration of his song, to stimulate his countrymen to courage and to arms. The spirit of patriotism that was breathed over his lyre on this occasion, could hardly fail to draw forth its deepest and its sublimest tones: and perhaps there is hardly to be found in his works a more animated and elegant composition than that well-timed "Ode to the Volunteers*," to which we now refer, and which was at this time printed in the "Iris." It was an elaborate specimen of the spirit and versification of that patriotic poem, which was presently to become the corner-stone of his rising reputation. We have already alluded to that little band of Quakers, who were Montgomery's fellow prisoners in York Castle, having been prosecuted in the Court of Exchequer for the accumulated tithes of many years, by the Rev. G. Markham, vicar of Carlton, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, when a decree was obtained by the prosecutor for costs of suit, in default of the payment of which the defendants were incarcerated.

* Works, p. 271. A string of ludicrous verses, provoked by Montgomery's compliment to the Volunteers, and understood to have been written by one of the officers of a regular regiment at this time lying in Sheffield, appeared in Cobbett's "Political Register."

One of the sufferers closed his life in prison, after a confinement of two years: of the rest, who, as we have seen, were subsequently liberated, Joseph Brown, "a thoughtful, humble-minded man, who occasionally solaced himself with writing 'Prison Amusements' in verse," died on the 28th of June. He had been a minister in the Society, much esteemed by Friends and others — his life and conversation exemplifying the doctrines which he preached. Montgomery recorded his death in the "Iris," in which also appeared "Verses to the Memory of Joseph Brown, of Lothersdale *; *by one who had been his Fellow Prisoner.*"† The verses entitled 'The Glowworm‡' were also written this year.

In the "Annual Review§" for this year, the contributions of Montgomery to the "Poetical Register" again called forth the encomiums of Dr. Aikin. "Most of the pieces of distinguished merit," says the Doctor, "which adorn this collection, are signed with the names of writers already known to the public. We observed, however, both in the last volume and in the present, some pieces with the signature of 'Alcæus,' which were excelled by none of the others in spirit, originality, and true poetic fire. As an encouragement to bashful merit, we swell our article by copying the following:" viz., the "Ode to the Volunteers," dated "Sheffield, August 29. 1803."

* Of this good man, who died at the age of 52, after having been a minister among the Friends upwards of 20 years, some account may be seen in the "Life of Thomas Bulman," published in 1851, by James Backhouse. Although of Quaker parentage, he took such courses in youth as to cause him to be "cut off from the Society:" one striking phase of his heresy was, it seems, of a vocal character, for he said he could at one time "sing threescore and ten vain songs!"

† Works, p. 270. ‡ Ibid. p. 284.

§ Vol. II. p. 581.

"Though I made not a literal vow to this purport, yet I have ever since endeavoured to act as though such a vow were upon me; and I do think that no person can rise up to contradict me. One occasional lay after another, in the same reformed spirit, were issued in the course of the two following years. I then began to collect the series into a volume for publication. While this was slowly proceeding through my own press, a gentleman of high talent and skill both in poetry and painting, Mr. William Carey, made several visits to Sheffield; and with him I soon became so well acquainted, that I freely communicated to him my plans and my projects. With zeal, intrepidity, and perseverance most exemplary, he took up my cause, and not only recommended the unknown poet in distant parts of the kingdom which he visited professionally, but made me better known as such even at home, where for a long period I had been principally celebrated as the writer of a weekly article, entitled 'Facts and Rumours,' in my own newspaper."*

Mr. Carey, whose personal kindness Montgomery has gratefully acknowledged, had, as we shall find, other claims to be remembered in connection with Sheffield. He died in 1841†, having been at one period the most voluminous, if not the most entertaining of the poet's correspondents; many of his letters, which we recollect to have seen, bearing a similar relation in size to an ordinary post sheet, which the "Times" newspaper of *this* bore to the "Iris" of *that* day. While, with the combined ardour of a skilful connoisseur and a practised dealer, "he talked of your Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff," his friend attentively listened and duly profited; and not less when the subject of writing or conversation was the character and reputation of ancient, or contemporary poets.

* Iris, Nov. 1825.

† Gentleman's Magazine, Feb. 1842, p. 139.

These observations have carried us rather beyond the exact period to which the subjoined letter strictly belongs; but it will not be read with less interest on that account:—

*James Montgomery to Ignatius Montgomery.*

"Sheffield, Sept. 23. 1803.

"My dear Brother,

"I take up my pen to write to you, though I have scarcely a word to say, except to thank you for your last most affectionate letter. In truth, I only write now for want of worse employment. Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Nanson are both in London, and as I have not a friend to smoke a pipe with this evening, I have determined to spend a few minutes of it with you. Before your letter arrived, I was anxious to hear how you and your company had fared on your journey to Fulneck, and since your return:—it seems you have had one of the visitations of humanity to remind you, after six weeks of enjoyment, that you were mortal; and till your mortality be concluded, I pray that you may meet with none severer .... I feel something kinder than indifference towards the children at Fulneck from this neighbourhood; for as I consider myself, in some respect, the *passive cause* of their being sent thither, I cannot be unconcerned for their answering all the fond expectations of their friends. Eternal consequences often ensue from what we consider trifling things. My residence in this neighbourhood may have already stamped the colour and character of their whole future lives, and even of their everlasting state, by having thrown them into a situation of which their parents might never have heard, had I not been known to them. May their *call* to Fulneck prove a call to happiness here and hereafter!

"Dear brother, you see how I am apt to look far before me — much further, indeed, than I can see; but my heart aches so often, that it hardly knows any other sensations than those of remorse, apprehension, and despondency. I have almost outlived my hopes in this world — I mean my

worldly hopes. How comes it, brother, that we seldom, perhaps never, seriously turn our thoughts to eternity till we have been disgusted with the vanity, and sickened with the disappointments of time? Why cannot we embrace both this world and the next at once? Is the enjoyment of the one incompatible with the other? Am I to lead a life of self-denial and suffering, as cruel—and, I verily believe, as unprofitable — as the mortifications of a hermit, for the sake or, rather, as an indispensable condition of salvation? You cannot mistake me here, and imagine that I mean by the enjoyment of the world an indulgence in criminal excesses. I mean only those pleasures which men of strictly moral and conscientious minds think innocent, but against which the dissenters and methodists inveigh with a bitterness and bigotry that makes me sometimes imagine that religion is, indeed, a cross on which its professors are condemned to linger out their lives in agonies; but I must not expatiate on this subject, lest I should be betrayed into impiety of speech on what almost turns my brain to contemplate. Yet all this I think I could be content to suffer for the assurance of that peace with God which they profess to feel, and to which I am almost an utter stranger. I have no confidence towards him, except what all the world must have, — a confidence that he is good, and that what he does is right, whether I comprehend it or not; and that if he shuts me up in everlasting and unspeakable misery, he will convince me first that I have deserved it; and that, even consistently with his infinite mercy and infinite power, he could not mitigate my punishment. But why am I tormenting you with my sorrows? I know what you would answer to all this. I know what way you would point out to me to escape present and future sufferings! I dare not tell you that I cannot lay hold of that salvation which you preach, lest I should be guilty of lying against the Spirit of God; but indeed, brother, I sometimes fear I never shall lay hold of it. Farewell.

"Your sincerely affectionate brother,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. Ignatius Montgomery, Fulneck, near Leeds."

This letter affords large scope for comment, and every reader of it who, like the writer, has been buffeted with doubts and fears at the turning point of a spiritual life, will make it for himself. We need only remark, how gratifying it is to find one brother thus unreservedly pouring out the sad secrets of his soul into the sympathising bosom of another; and how one who so painfully felt the need of, and so earnestly sought for, salvation, was sure to find it.

Hereditarily connected with the choir of Eckington church, most of the members of old Mr. Gales's family evinced a taste, if not a talent, for music, which was not entirely confined to the singing-loft on Sundays. Village concerts were sometimes got up; and as most of the performers resided in the adjacent hamlets, and as Thomas Gales was not only "the father of those who could handle the harp[sichord] and the organ," but himself played well on the violoncello, their ancient house at "Nun's Bridge" often resounded with "the concord of sweet sounds," vocal and instrumental. To these it was occasionally Montgomery's luck to listen, comparing them, not always tacitly, with what he remembered at Fulneck: but he was compelled to admit that what they might lack of science, was more than made up by earnestness; while Mason, a better judge than himself, had often heard and commended the strains. These remarks will explain a passage at the close of the following letter: —

*Miss Sarah Gales to James Montgomery.*

"Nun's Bridge [Eckington], Nov. 14. 1803.

"DEAR JAMES,

"Have the goodness to send me (though it is now so much out of date that it may probably be out of print also) that most famous of all histories — the "History of a

Church and a Warming-pan." Perhaps you may have reserved the only remaining copy for yourself: if so, though it is your own offspring, and very like its parent, yet I suspect you do not retain much affection for it. You may therefore, if you please, send the bantling to me, and I will hand it to Savage, who appears very anxious to have it to bind up, in morocco and gold, with some other things of the same kind. As I am writing to you in the form of a letter, I may as well ask,—how do you do? and hope that neither your health nor your spirits are much affected by these cheerless days. I expected you were going to Wath last week; did business or, as usual, indolence, triumph over your better inclination? For myself, I am as calm and indifferent as still life and November weather can make me; though I ought not to complain, for I am at this moment surrounded with no less than three violins and a violoncello, the sounds of which both please me and exhilarate my spirits; in which happy disposition, I beg leave to subscribe myself,

"Your friend and servant,

"S. GALES.

"Mr. Montgomery, Sheffield."

# CHAP. XXVI.

## 1804.

AMBITION AND PRESUMPTION OF BONAPARTE. — GESSLER AND TELL. — THE POET'S STUDY IN THE HARTSHEAD. — INFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL OBJECTS. — MISS GALES'S SHOP. — LETTER TO ASTON. — NEWSPAPER STATISTICS. — LETTERS TO AND FROM SAMUEL ROBERTS. — THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE AND MR. ROSCOE. — SONNET.

THE subject which, next to the rumours of invasion, at this time employed the pen of Montgomery, was the preparation which the First Consul of France was making to place on his own head the crown of Charlemagne, and consummate his career of ambition by a self-investiture with the imperial purple. Blinded by the dazzle of Bonaparte's victories, and reconciled by a species of infatuation not peculiar to themselves, the French people presented at this period the phenomenon of a nation of republicans rejoicing to behold an individual who had started from their own ranks, about to assume that regal authority which they had so lately sacrificed hundreds of thousands of lives and shed seas of blood to abrogate.

Few political writers longer or more perseveringly pursued the track, or more diligently and dispassionately reported the progress of Napoleon than Montgomery. Pen in hand, for thirty years, it was his fortune to record the ambition, the successes, and, finally, the signal

downfall of that "great, bad man," as he once called him.

But while, on the one hand, the editor of the "Iris" reprobated the ambition of Bonaparte, and deplored the military ravages which marked his career, he, on the other hand, differed from those politicians who sought to make him the scape-goat of all the evils which the abettors or agents of war had, in his opinion, brought upon all the countries of Europe. On this account he created against himself enemies amongst those who not only believed the emperor to be capable of every atrocity, but who were ready to exult whenever deeds of wickedness could be laid at his door. He was, for instance, keenly attacked for having presumed to question the legitimacy of a current report of cruelties imputed to Bonaparte, by calling it a "bastard brother" to those stories of poisoning the sick, and shooting the prisoners, which had been given to the public by Sir Robert Wilson. Charged with casting an imputation on the facts of these horrible murders, and, consequently, on the veracity of the reporters of them, he replied in this manly and independent tone: —

"They [the reports in question] were mentioned, that we might express our unqualified abhorrence of the 'abominable delight' with which the champions of everlasting warfare have so frequently expatiated upon them, as if they rejoiced — not in the atrocities themselves — but that the enemy of their country had been guilty of them! Against this spirit — a spirit of irreconcilable enmity — an evil and a lying spirit, that would persuade two nations that their existence together in the world was impossible, and that in the present contest the one or the other must be utterly overthrown — against this spirit, and this spirit alone, was the sting of the paragraph directed: and after this explanation

none will be offended, except those (if there be any so depraved) who would *lament* to hear it proved, that the crimes charged upon Bonaparte in Syria were *untrue*. We have never been the advocates of that man: and if on one subject more than on all others we have exposed ourselves to calumny and invective, we have suffered from a description of persons, the very *antipodes* of our present accusers, the most violent and acrimonious reproaches for our continual and consistent reprobation of the tyranny and ambition of the First Consul of France."

The following paragraph propounds a whimsical question to the consciences and the casuistry of his readers. After describing, in conformity with statements in the French papers, a portable wooden house, which was at this time fitted up for the convenience of Bonaparte, as his temporary field lodge when he should reach the British shores, the editor of the "Iris" observes: —

"There is another kind of "*portable wooden house*" sometimes carried on men's shoulders, of smaller size, and less commodious form, which one day will probably serve him also for '*a field lodge*' under ground, and in one narrow chamber imprison the man whom the world is too little to hold! Which of these 'portable wooden houses' may an honest man on this side of the Channel innocently wish the Chief Consul to inhabit?"

We know not how we might have replied to this question at the time. But the event has passed! Bonaparte's earthly career has long been consummated: he *now* occupies that "narrow chamber" alluded to: and we cannot transcribe this paragraph without a passing reflection on that strange series of events by which he who, at the period in question, directed the destinies of Europe was afterwards made the prisoner of a soli-

tary rock, which became for a time his grave and his monument: and, after resting there, in his "field lodge under ground," surrounded by the ocean, thousands of leagues from the scenes of his splendour, and the theatre of his ambition, was finally borne in his "portable wooden house" from the island of St. Helena, to the "narrow chamber" of a sumptuous mausoleum in the capital of "la belle France!"

But to return to the "Iris," and the imperial coronation.

"The mayors of *thirty-six cities*," says our editor, "are summoned to assist on the occasion, but in what manner we know not, unless they are to lie down in his path, that the emperor may walk over their necks to the altar in token of the abasement of *thirty-six millions* of human beings, whose lives and liberties his Majesty will that day trample under foot. That day, however, is not yet fixed; but the crown is fixed,—and so fixed on his head, that the Count de Lille (as the 'Moniteur' styles Louis XVIII.) may as reasonably hope to protest that head from his shoulders as that crown from his head." *—*July* 19. 1804.

For the sake of connection, we shall here introduce another quotation on this subject, although it properly belongs to the year following: —

"The statue of the Emperor Napoleon has been erected (to borrow the phrase as we find it) in *the bosom* of the legislative body; in the place we presume where there *ought to have been a heart* to repel such a bugbear. The Paris papers on this occasion are crowded with descriptions of the idolatrous ceremonies and festivities at the inauguration of this 'image of the beast' which all France worshippeth, and whose

* And yet the least probable of these two most unlikely things *did* come to pass!

mark—the mark of slavery—is branded on every forehead in the empire. We recollect the time when Bonaparte told the citizens of Paris that he would permit no statue to be erected to his honour while living, but that when dead, if they *then* thought his memory deserved it, they might re-animate him in marble or brass. Whence comes it, that his mind is so suddenly changed? Is it to gratify his own eyes, or to dazzle those of his people, that he permits this pagod to be set up in the arrogant security of his power, and in mockery of their servitude? Switzerland might perhaps have suffered and submitted for another century to German oppression, had not Gessler, the tyrant, fixed his hat upon a pole to be worshipped by the poor mountaineers. The fate of Gessler may soon be that of Bonaparte, and the fortune of Switzerland that of France. The emperor has endeavoured to revive the days of *Charlemagne:* but who shall bring back the age of William Tell?"—*February* 7. 1805.

The mention of William Tell, like an echo from Montgomery's study, recalls us from the coronation of Bonaparte to the progress of the "Wanderer of Switzerland," which, although as yet unpublished, was, we believe, not unwritten. The poet was now elaborating for the press his exquisite stores of imagery and sentiment, and imbuing the subject which he had selected for their display with that patriotic fervour and romantic love of freedom which distinguished the unfortunate Switzers. A few remarks on the locality and aspect of Montgomery's study may not be uninteresting here. It was a small back room of a large building in the centre of the town, and looking immediately upon one of the meanest masses of dead brick walls in Sheffield: from *its* windows he could see none of the fine scenery in the neighbourhood, that might serve even to *remind* him in summer of pastoral Alpine landscapes, or in winter of falling avalanches,—of the cottages, the

lakes, or the waterfalls of Switzerland at any season. Different opinions have been held on the comparative advantages of *situation* for study; many persons have disputed the utility of an author being enabled, during the process of composition, to lift the eye at any moment from the subject that is expanding on his mind or his manuscript, to the actual contemplation of a fine prospect beheld through his window. This process of immediate inspection and examination is essential to a landscape painter, who would be faithful to details, though it is not, by any means, necessary in the composition even of a *descriptive* poem, whether the leading features be spirited and general, the faithful transcripts of grand impressions, as in the case of Thomson's "Seasons," or when comprising minute particulars, as in Bloomfield's "Farmer's Boy." The general and special effects of climate, scenery, and local associations or attachments,—the heart, the memory, the imagination of a true poet,—as affecting the vividness and truth of his conceptions, and influencing his style, are, of course, universally admitted. They illustrate that philosophy of our nature which makes men poets who never "penned a stanza"—or where they are yet uncivilised, without any regular literature, or even a written language.

Mr. Everett one day remarked to Montgomery that Matlock would be a fine situation for the permanent residence of a poet, as the beauty and variety of the scenery, according to the current opinion, would induce sublime thoughts. He partly exploded the notion; observing that he should have to lament for his own situation, if it was so. "From the room in which I sit to write," said Montgomery, "and where some of my happiest pieces have been produced—those I mean which are most popular,—all the pro-

spect I have is a confined yard, where there are some miserable old walls and the backs of houses, which present to the eye neither beauty, variety, nor anything else calculated to inspire a single thought, except concerning the rough surface of the bricks, the corners of which have either been chipped off by violence, or fretted away by the weather. No; as a general rule, whatever of poetry is to be derived from scenery, must be secured before we sit down to compose—the impressions must be made already, and the mind must be abstracted from surrounding objects. It will not do to be expatiating abroad in observation, when we should be at home in concentration of thought."

Places and things, in themselves insignificant it may be, sometimes become, as it were, consecrated, when connected with great or good men, or the history of memorable deeds. Dr. Johnson, it will be recollected, has recorded, in a striking passage on the ruins of Icolmkill, his testimony to the truth of this principle: and surely the individual who could visit the residence of any of our more eminent English poets, and stand in the room in which each studied and wrote, without emotion, is not to be envied for his apathy. The apartment above referred to, and which had been Montgomery's study for many years, was pulled down in 1819, and a somewhat more convenient room, with better ingress to the printing-office, erected on its site: the aspect, however, was the same. It was not without mingled feelings of regret and veneration that the writer of this paragraph paid a farewell visit to the little sanctum during its dilapidation. At the commencement of Montgomery's editorial career, when he considered it indispensable to appear *in propriâ personâ* to his friends, he commonly sat in a small room separated by a ceiling from Miss Gales's shop, so that he could readily step in to receive

orders, advertisements, or other communications; but this apartment had the threefold inconvenience of being too near the street; of exposing him to the necessity of overhearing whatever was said in the shop; and, worse than all, to frequent interruption from unseasonable visitors.

The following letter, relating as it does to temporary business matters, is given, under an impression that the items of cost which it contains may be a little curious as compared with similar heads of outlay in the present altered scale of newspaper expenses: Aston had just commenced publishing the "Manchester Exchange Herald."

*James Montgomery to Joseph Aston.*

"Sheffield, Sept. 4. 1804.

"My dear Friend,

"... So you are my brother now, as well as my friend, and I congratulate both you and myself on our new typographical relationship: it offers a prospect of more frequent communication; we may meet each other in print every week! I am curious to know in what character you intend to appear. Will you rank among the gods as a Mercury, or among men as a Herald? Will you assume the shape of a sun, a star, or a broomstick? No matter; come in what form or person you may, my friend Joseph Aston will always be welcome. But now to business and your hard questions. I pay 58*s.* 6*d.* for the paper of 1000 stamps, such as I use; the duty on 1000, deducting the discount, amounts to 12*l.* 2*s.* 6*d.*, and the expense of postage (which I pay, remitting due bills, or paying the discount, if not due within a week) may amount to about 1*s.* per thousand more; the carriage by waggon to Sheffield amounts to about 3*s.* 9*d.* a thousand: the whole expense of a thousand stamps delivered in my office at these rates, is 15*l.* 5*s.* 9*d.*; and the amount of the same when printed, at 6*d.* each, 25*l.* I think a penny a paper completely covers all my expenses

of delivery and loss by bad debts, except when I am careless, and deserve to suffer for my indolence and inattention. The delivery of one part of my impression (which is not very large) costs me nothing, as many papers are sold in the shop [of the Misses Gales] and by my apprentices in the town: for another part I pay a newsman in the town and immediate neighbourhood a halfpenny a paper; and to another, who delivers them in the villages adjacent, within four or five miles, a penny each. This latter expense is too high; but the man is an old servant; the bargain was inconsiderately made, and I am determined not to break it without a better reason than because it is a bad one. To the booksellers in other towns who sell the 'Iris' (*all at their own risk entirely, for I send not a paper on trial*) I allow 2*s.* 6*d.* for fifty papers. This is very moderate; but many printers allow only a halfpenny a paper. I send no newsmen above four or five miles off, as our neighbourhood is thinly peopled; and when this was formerly done, the horses ate off their heads and tails, and the men devoured through the very stamps themselves. It was a most unprofitable business, and, what is very wonderful, I had the wit to find it out, and the wisdom to discontinue it. You will be placed in a different, and I hope more fortunate, situation. I was going to say something very fine just here, but the length of my task, and the brevity of my paper deterred me, though I could have said it in half the room I have occupied in saying that I would not say it. I would recommend the house of Jones and Leventhorpe to supply you with stamps. You must write, enclosing a bill due, or nearly so, to the amount, or thereabouts, of *the quantity of paper and stamps* that you choose to order at once: they will send the paper to the stamp office, pay for the stamping, and, in three days from the receipt of your letter, will send off the quantity by any conveyance you appoint. The paper you propose to print upon may cost 8*s.* or 10*s.* a thousand more than mine, —or perhaps more still, for I cannot state the price, never using any of the size. The house which I have named, I am sure will serve you as well and as low as any in London; but you must be rigidly exact in requiring them punctually

and expeditiously to forward the stamps, for which you must bind them to time—by threats and promises, if necessary: —you know what I mean. You may mention my name to them in any manner you please; and when I have your authority, I will mention yours to them in such a manner as I shall think proper. Command me freely, and command me fully, in this and in every other respect wherein I can serve you. There is a type foundry in Glasgow, where, for plain founts, you may be served, as well at least (but I think much better) at prices 20 *per cent.* lower than in London —'Alexander Wilson and Sons.' Taylor and Newton must be written to, soliciting their recommendation to advertisers. They send advertisements, in a great measure, to whom they please; you charge them according to your regular scale, and allow them 5 per cent. commission; and you send a paper, *gratis*, weekly, to be filed by them. This is very reasonable. Respecting the purchase and exchange of newspapers, you must do as well as you can. I receive daily two London newspapers, which I pay for, and exchange with about eight or nine country printers. I allow booksellers and newsmen sixpence each on advertisements which they send or bring, and are accountable for. I think I have answered most of your questions: ask again whenever you have occasion. You do not know the author of the lines on Faith [in the 'Iris'], for I am not sure that I do. I am in the press in the shape of a foolscap octavo; but *I have stuck fast ever since last October;* for I never work for myself when I can find a better master, and more profitable employment than printing miscellaneous poetry.

"Your friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. Joseph Aston, Manchester."

He adds, in the next letter:—

"I give one man in my office 23*s.* per week, the others 20*s.*; and my pressman, who is a very poor hand, only 16*s.* I believe Mr. Sheardown, of Doncaster, may give a little, but very little, more. At Wakefield and Leeds the wages

are nearly the same. I give 4½*d.* a thousand for piece-work; but as there is seldom occasion for overwork, I generally pay the compositors 6*d.* per hour for any time above the regular day's work. At Leeds and York, I believe, they only allow 4*d.* per thousand. I am sorry to hear of the mutinous spirit among the Manchester printers; I fear the infection will spread."

Mr. Samuel Roberts, a respectable and benevolent master manufacturer, whose name will often occur in the latter portions of this work, having sent for insertion in the "Iris" a ballad, entitled the "Two Orphans," which is now frequently found in collections of verses for the young, asked Montgomery to let him have a few copies on separate slips. This will explain the meaning of the following somewhat characteristic notes, which we give not merely as marking a commencement of the intercourse, but as furnishing, with, perhaps, a single exception, afterwards to be noticed, the only specimen existing in the poet's hand of the frequent and long continued correspondence between the two friends.

*James Montgomery to Samuel Roberts.*

"Hartshead, Wednesday, Nov. 14. 1804.

"SIR,

"I have sent a few copies of your interesting ballad, which you will please to accept as a very slight acknowledgment of the affecting delight with which I have repeatedly read it. I fear that there is an error in the first letter of the signature; but all my powers of deciphering were baffled by the search for it in the manuscript. I called twice yesterday at your warehouse to ask you concerning it, that you might have it correctly printed in these copies; but not meeting with you either time, the error, if it be one, remains.

"I am, respectfully,

"Your obliged, obedient servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. Roberts."

*Samuel Roberts to James Montgomery.*

"Eyre Street, Nov. 14. 1804.

"SIR,

"I have received your polite and obliging note of this day. I trust that you will excuse my accepting your intended present, not that I should feel any objections to be laid under further obligations by one whom I so much esteem, and whose good opinion I so much value; but as I ordered them in the way of trade, I should in future feel on any similar occasion as if I was asking a favour.

"I therefore hope you will add the expense of the few copies to my account, which, when convenient, I shall be glad to have. The signature is correct. I used it first when I was S. R., Jun. I am sorry you gave yourself so much trouble in calling. I am afraid the trifle which your politeness causes you to commend can boast no other merit than good intentions and a good moral tendency, which I do sincerely hope I shall always keep steadily in view in any other trifle which I may hereafter send to the press; but should I ever carelessly do otherwise, I shall always feel grateful to you, or any other friend, who will take the trouble of correcting me.

"Sir,

"I am respectfully yours,

"SAMUEL ROBERTS."

Montgomery, before he left school, had made some progress in the Italian language, the study of which he did not immediately afterwards abandon, though we have no indication of his progress in it till this year, when he published two or three of those "Imitations" of sonnets from Tuscan poets, which appear in his works. He thus became known to a distinguished author, whose familiarity with the muses and their patrons on the banks of the Arno has shed a lasting lustre around his name—William Roscoe, Esq., of Liverpool: they frequently exchanged books and letters. We know not why the following sonnet on "Venice," from Bet-

tinelli, has been omitted from our author's collected works, except it was by accident:—

"Venice, situated on the Adriatic Gulf, was founded by refugees, in the fourth century, when Italy was overrun by Attila, king of the Huns."

"With talons terrible, for slaughter spread,
On wings that made a tempest of their way,
Down darting from the Alps, by vengeance led,
Th' Hungarian Falcon pounced upon his prey:

"From wrath and rapine, trembling with dismay,
The Italian Doves before the Spoiler sped,
And wide o'er vales and mountains driven astray,
Far from their ravaged homes for ever fled.

"Then found the wiser Halcyon's lovely brood,
(Scared from their country, ruined and oppressed,)
A safe asylum on the rolling flood:
By Worth upheld, by Liberty carest,
'Midst thrones in ashes, cities sunk in blood,
Ages on ages passed—behold the beauteous nest!

"ALCÆUS.

"Sheffield, Dec. 12. 1804."

## CHAP. XXVII.

### 1805.

DEATH OF "JUSTICE WILKINSON." — THE "SNOWDROP." — THE "OCEAN." — IMPUTED DISLOYALTY. — THE QUAKER'S PLACARD. — THE "WIDOW."—LETTER TO ASTON.—AMUSING MISTAKE.—GENERAL MACK. — THREATENED PROSECUTIONS. — DEATH OF LORD NELSON. — CHANTREY, THE SCULPTOR. — THE "GRAVE."—THE "COMMON LOT," AND "PIPING BULLFINCHES."—GILFILLAN'S REMARKS.

On the 18th of January died, at Boroughbridge, aged 75, the Rev. James Wilkinson, vicar of Sheffield, and one of the justices of the peace, before whom Montgomery had been summoned and examined in the days of his imputed Jacobinism. The worthy magistrate and our friend had, however, long stood on the footing of good neighbourhood; and on the death of the former, the obituary of the "Iris" contained an ample testimony to the value of a life which "had been pre-eminently distinguished by unaffected piety, inflexible integrity, and unwearied zeal in the service of the public during a period of half a century."

The earliest trace of Montgomery's pen in his poetical vocation occurs in some lines to the "Snowdrop," in which the author's tendency to a constitutional melancholy is strongly indicated.

> "There is a winter in my soul,
> The winter of despair;
> O when shall spring its rage controul?
> When shall the Snowdrop blossom there?

Cold gleams of comfort sometimes dart
A dawn of glory on my heart,
But quickly pass away:
Thus Northern-lights the gloom adorn,
And give the promise of a morn
That never turns to day!"

We have ever esteemed as among the most spirited and elegant of our author's minor compositions the stanzas entitled the "Ocean:" they were originally dated "Scarborough, Aug. 17. 1805," and were soon afterwards printed in the "Iris," with the favourite signature of "Alcæus." He had on previous occasions visited this place for the benefit of his health; and there he fully realised the description of Homer, in a well-known line concerning a very different personage — "Βῆ δ' ἀκέων παρὰ θῖνα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης,"* — walking and meditating in solitude by the sea-side.

In the very midst of these cogitations of the poet, in sight and while listening to the sounds of the ocean from the eastern cliffs, intelligence arrived at Scarborough of the naval victory obtained by Sir Robert Calder over the French and Spanish fleets off the western coast of Spain. This incident led to the following apostrophe:—

"Britannia is wielding the trident to-day,
Consuming her foes in her ire,
And hurling the thunder of absolute sway
From her wave-ruling chariots of fire:—
She triumphs;—the winds and the waters conspire
To spread her invincible name;
The universe rings with her fame;
But the cries of the fatherless mix with her praise,
And the tears of the widow are shed on her bays."

* "Forlorn, he roam'd the ocean's sounding shore."—Cowper's *Homer*, vol. i. p. 43.

Ready as Montgomery ever was to deplore, and no less anxious to deprecate or avert the shedding of human blood, he never failed to honour the prowess of his countrymen, and to defend the claims of Great Britain to her position of supremacy among the nations of the earth.

"For ages and ages, with barbarous foes,
The Saxon, Norwegian, and Gaul,
We wrestled, were foiled, were cast down, but we rose
With new vigour, new life from each fall;
*By all we were conquered;*—WE CONQUERED THEM ALL!

"The cruel, the cannibal mind,
We softened, subdued, and refined;
Bears, wolves, and sea-monsters, they rushed from their den,
We taught them, we tamed them, we turned them to men."

This stanza exhibits a spirited epitome of the history, the patriotism, the humanity, and the poetry of our country.

*Everett:* "Have you seen the current number of the 'Ladies' Monthly Museum?'" *Montgomery:* "No, sir." *Everett:* "You will perceive from the editor's remarks on your poetry, that he has adopted the opinions of his leaders. . . . Now, did you ever meet with a critic who helped himself more freely to what belongs to another?" *Montgomery:* "He has certainly made very free; and, like many other persons who either cannot or will not think for themselves, he contradicts at the close what he had asserted at the beginning of his remarks. He says, in reference to the ocean, which I describe as '*dimpled* with oars,' and '*dark* with the gale,' that 'both the ideas are absurd and unnatural;' but surely he never can have seen the sea from the rock of Scarborough, or a similar scene. Any observant

person, so situated, must perceive that the oars of a small boat, on dropping into the water, do *dimple* it, producing at the same time beautiful circles of eddies. This is perfectly distinct from the swelling and unbroken action of the larger waves, which, as elevated by the gale, throw very distinct shadows over the lesser billows, thus literally *darkening* them."

*James Montgomery to Misses A. E. and S. Gales.*

"Scarborough, Aug. 13. 1805.

"My dear Friends,

"You will be curious, if not anxious, to know how I come on in the world of Scarborough. Since I wrote last to you I have outlived a whole generation of visitors at this house, and am now a kind of antediluvian patriarch of a whole fortnight's standing, which at this place is a most venerable age. In consequence of this, I have been, by the law of primogeniture, exalted to the head of the table, which you may be sure is an honour I was most reluctantly compelled to accept, and which I bear most meekly. Hitherto I have had good supporters and councillors about me in some fat and fair ladies, who sit next to me, and among whom I appear like a rushlight among torches. They assist me in carving, and almost entirely save me the trouble of talking, for both which obligations I am most truly their humble servant; but, except at table, I am inflexibly shy, and have never been squire to any one of them yet, though more elderly gentlemen than I am have been proud of accompanying them on their walks. My favourite, however, is gone this morning; though she did not weigh more than twenty stone, I shall feel a great loss of her. She was a lady from London, dressed as magnificently as a duchess, and had as jolly, handsome, and goodnatured a countenance as ever I saw, and she was always so kind to me, that I should have liked her no less if she had had only half the weight and beauty which she possessed. She had a son with her, a spoiled young Oxonian, who, we understood here, was to come speedily to the enjoyment of 2000*l.* a-year. Against

this goldfinch a fair spinster, who sits at my right hand, played off all the artillery of her eyes and her tongue. How far she succeeded I cannot tell; but he is now fled, and the damsel, I doubt not, is as disconsolate for him as I am for his mother. There is a third lady in my circle, who has so awful a countenance, that I tremble to look at her; she talks, and laughs, and looks—no matter how—for positively I won't write another word of scandal in this epistle.

"'How do you employ your time?' you are ready to ask. I employ it so stupidly that I could very well afford to lend six hours a day, on good security, to any lady or gentleman who would pay me handsome interest for it. I eat and drink and walk all day, and try to sleep all night. I never in my life lived so long a time without fire. It is a fact, that I have never *seen* a fire in this house, nor been near one in all Scarborough, except at the barber's shop, to the best of my recollection. There is self-denial with a vengeance for you! I only smoke one pipe at night, and sometimes none. I have several times been out in a small boat for a few miles in the bay. This is very pleasant; and the sea-breezes are like gales from paradise; they warm my withered heart into life, and blow my mildewed cheeks into bloom. One evening I went out a-fishing, and had charming sport: for two hours, in a chill atmosphere, on a dark sea, I watched a cork floating, till my eyes ached and my brain was dizzy; and so intent and expert was I at the trade, that for a long time I was fishing with a *naked hook*, the rogues below having nibbled away the bait. I have often fished along the *stream of life* in this manner. However, on this memorable occasion I caught two fishes; but it was not my fault—I I could not help it—they hung themselves with my line, and I hope they forgave me with their dying breath; and this they ought to have done, because I have freely forgiven their brethren who would not let me catch them.

Last night we had another tremendous storm of thunder and lightning.* I was in a fearful situation, having taken

* For an account of the storm here alluded to, and a reference to that described in this letter, see "Prose by a Poet," vol. ii. p. 73.

shelter in a huge and desolate news-room, like an apartment in the Castle of Udolpho; it is on the sands; the sea was raging round its rocky foundation; the wind blew loud, the rain dashed down in torrents, the lightning fell in floods on the water, and the thunder echoed dreadfully round the coast. I was alone; the evening grew darker and darker, and the storm wilder and wilder. I read newspapers, or rather looked at them, so long as I could see, while the pages often flashed with the reflection of the lightnings, and my heart ached almost to splitting with the thunder. At length I got up and paced about the room, which is very large and miserably forlorn, having only a table, a few chairs, and a clock in it. In the midst of my alarm the clock struck; it startled me, and I quaked as if the flags had descended at my feet. At length I turned out and ran along the shore to my lodgings. The heavens seemed in a blaze, the sea in madness, and the mountains of the coast falling around me. This is all mighty fine, but it is only poetical, you may think. You are mistaken; it is true. Had you seen, as I have seen, a flash of lightning burst over your head, and kill three of your fellow-creatures in a moment, you would not be ashamed, as I am not, to feel the terrors of such a storm shaking your soul almost to dissolution. I have not heard of any mischief done on this occasion; but I must quit this dreadful scene.

I don't know what to say about my health; and as for my spirits, they have been several times so agitated since I came hither, that, like the sea after a storm, they will be a long time before they can rock themselves calm. Pray write to me soon; and don't, on any account, forget to tell me how your dear and honoured parents are; I was dreaming last night with all my might about you altogether. Give my best remembrance to all my friends who think me worth inquiring after. Have I not been very good to write three times to Sheffield, and never once inquire after my brute creation? Give my love to Bully [the bird], to Blunder [the dog], and what you please to Puss. Tell the garden that I hope it is in good health, and grows well in my ab-

sence. Farewell, my dear, kind friends, and be assured of the grateful esteem and affection of your friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Miss Gales, Sheffield."

It was while Montgomery was at Scarborough, dictating the patriotic lines on the "Ocean," that the alarm occasioned by the unaccountable firing of the Grenno-wood beacon occurred, as already described: and we have heard him mention, as a curious proof how little his character was then known, the fact, that, in the midst of the local hubbub consequent on the apprehended invasion and the mustering of the Sheffield Volunteers, a highly respectable lady pointed to the absence of the editor of the "Iris" as a suspicious coincidence! We have, indeed, his own printed testimony, that at this period false and mischievous imputations on his loyalty were not confined to idle gossip. Having adverted to his prosecutions and imprisonment, he says:*—"On two other occasions I was in danger of legal vengeance. In the first case, I had been merely the printer and publisher of a tract (or broadside) for a person of wealth and character, who, I admit, may possibly have been ignorant of the misery of fear and suspense in which he involved me; for till a prosecution should be actually commenced, I had determined never to apply to him, and I never did." In this case, Montgomery was employed by a generally respected and wealthy member of the Society of Friends to print for him a half-sheet foolscap circular, or hand-bill, entitled "The Soldier no Christian," containing arguments against war similar to those which were afterwards so extensively circulated by the "Peace Societies" in England and America. Who was the immediate mover

* Works, General Preface, p. xii.

of the attention paid to Montgomery on account of the printing of this paper, or what was the specific nature of the charge intended to be made — if there had appeared ground to sustain one — he never knew. But a meeting was held at the Cutlers' Hall, by a number of gentlemen, to consider the subject. It may be added, that although Montgomery never had any proof that the Quaker who employed him was actually aware of the peril in which he was placed, he entertained little doubt of it, as the matter was much talked about at the time. Amidst this movement, however, the man called and paid for his tracts, without saying a word to, or hearing a word from, the threatened printer.

The following paragraph is from a very spirited and indignant article on the war movement:

"We do not know that hostilities have yet commenced on the continent; if they are delayed a month longer the collecting armies may be mustered on the field of battle just in time to go into winter quarters. Alas! not so: there must first be an *autumn* among their legions. He that rides on the "pale horse" shall pass through their encampments, and at the blast of his lips they shall fall like the leaves of the forest before the winds of October; their winter quarters shall be in the dust."— *Iris*, Sept. 28.

How powerfully does the above passage remind us of Lord Byron's well-known lines, written some time after its publication in the newspapers! —

"Like the leaves of the forest, when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.
The angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he past,
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their breasts but once heaved, and for ever grew still."

We venture to make another extract: —

"Since the Almighty set his bow in the cloud, as a token of a covenant between himself and the earth, there has never been a season [of harvest] more heart-gladdening than the present. While the great ones of the world are, on every side, conspiring against its peace, devoting its soil to desolation, and its inhabitants to death, we see the unchangeably-benevolent Father of the Universe raining down mercies from the clouds, and overflowing the land with his benefits. There is not a time when GOD is more visible, or when he is less remembered than amidst the joy of autumn. While Nature is offering up to her Maker the sacrifice of all her fruits, and corn fields are waving abroad and around in adoration of Him, man, rioting in abundance, denies the bounty of his Benefactor, and claims every blessing as the product of his own industry, or his inheritance by birth; forgetful of the hand that spreads the purple glory of the vintage upon the hills, and pours through the vallies the golden flood of harvest: the hand that in anger put forth, could intercept the light of the sun, and chill the earth by its shadow alone, with a curse of everlasting sterility."

His next poetical composition was the "Widow; written at the request of a lady, who furnished several of the lines, and the plan of the whole." It was published first in the "Iris," and afterwards in the "Poetical Register."* Montgomery's colleague in this little piece was Mrs. Skepper, of York, formerly Miss Benson, and who afterwards became the third wife of Basil Montague Esq. She was one of the earliest, liveliest, and most interesting correspondents of her sex, that his yet unexpanded reputation procured for him. In a letter addressed to the poet before she had seen him, she pleasantly threatens him with a pilgrimage to Sheffield†,

* Poetical Register, vol. v. p. 17. 1805.

† She did call upon the poet in the following year, and was much gratified with the interview, in the course of which she per-

if he would not call upon her at York on his way to Scarborough; adding, as an apology for her importunity, "You will allow that some deference is due to my *age* as well as to my sex, for I was married on the very day on which you were born!" The poet kept up a correspondence with Mrs. Montague and her husband during their lifetime. The little piece above mentioned was not comprised in any volume published by our author previous to the collection of his poems in 1841. He thus explained the omission: —

"The widow, who, I have no doubt, was a sincere mourner, has since then become the wife of a gentleman, who himself had been twice married, and had children by both his former wives. The daughter, too, of my once disconsolate friend has now (1822) arrived at womanhood, and is herself married to a poet*, and is no longer, I hope, the subject of grief on any ground. Under these circumstances, I thought it would hardly be decorous to revive old associations."

Time, which first created this difficulty, appears, in twenty years more, to have removed it. The stanzas received some delicate revisions in the transcription: for instance, the concluding lines originally stood: —

"And still, a father, fondly kind,
Loves the dear pledge he left behind;
Behold that pledge! then cease thy tears to flow,
And in the mother's love, forget the widow's woe."

---

suaded him to give her a copy of the "Loss of the Locks," which, as she afterwards remarked, exhibited "a great deal of imagination, and many very beautiful thoughts." The letter which conveyed this compliment contained also the following:—"I do not know of any antidote to your melancholy: you have fortunately a powerful spell at your own fire-side in the perpetual sunshine of Miss Gales' countenance—which I cannot recollect without pleasure—and in the animated society of her sister."

* Mr. Proctor, poetically known as "Barry Cornwall."

In the corrected edition they are as follows: —

"And still a father, fondly kind,
Eyes the dear pledge he left behind:
So love may deem, and death may prove it so;
In heaven, at least, there is no widow's woe;
Thither, in following him, with thy sweet infant go."*

Such are sometimes the vicissitudes of a poetical composition!

There was another widow, residing near Sheffield, whose name has already been mentioned, and concerning whom a line or two will be in place here. In the month of May was published a volume of "Poems, by Barbara Hoole," with an almost unprecedented list of subscribers — their names filling more than forty pages! The book was not only printed at Montgomery's press, but every article in it had the benefit of his revision; and many a pleasant interview took place between the good-natured poet and the ingenious young widow, during the composition of most of her verses in the two preceding years. On one occasion he gave her a pocket-book, as a New Year's gift, containing the following inscription: —

"Reviewing Time's perennial flight,
We mark some lovely hours;
Like stars in dark December's night,
Or winter-blooming flowers:

"Such as amid the dreary past,
Your happiest days appear,
Such — but improving to the last,
Be all in this new year.

"J. M.

"December, 1803."

* Works, p. 349.

At this period, the old principle of high prices and long credit had not given way to the system of modern competition: nor was Montgomery, as a comparatively young tradesman without capital, as yet in a position to allow his customers to defer payment of their accounts till the Statute of Limitations barred his claim in law. He was, therefore, sometimes seen riding forth to a considerable distance to collect what was due to him from subscribers to his newspaper. On one of these occasions he came to Knottingly, near Pontefract, where he intended to rest and dine, and dismounted, opposite the sign of the "Dog." He opened the house door, entered, told one of the inmates to take charge of his horse, which was done; and seeing the family at dinner, the poet said he would just sit down with them, and take part of what they had. He took his place at table, was helped to a plate of meat, and commenced operations very satisfactorily. A suspicion, however, somehow arose in his mind, and a question fell from his lips, to which a single monosyllable in reply, kindly enough uttered by his host, explained to the uninvited and abashed, but not unwelcome visitor that he had unwittingly entered, and was dining with a private family *next door* to the Inn! The parties had no suspicion as to who their guest might be, until the mistake was discovered: it was but a slight mitigation of the awkwardness of the misadventure, that Montgomery had, as it happened, the name of his involuntary entertainer in his book as a debtor.

In a letter dated October 19. 1805, Montgomery thanks Aston for the compliment which he and other friends had paid him by electing him a member of the Manchester Philological Society. He adds:—

"I have neither had time nor sufficient enthusiasm of mind to write an essay to introduce myself among that

erudite body, and I dread the thoughts of it: but don't let me be misunderstood—it is not idleness that has prevented me from doing this: I can any day, if I have courage enough, steal half an hour from other cares and vexations to write a letter; but I never write for the public in a hurry (except in my newspaper, when I am flogged to it regularly every Wednesday), because I make it a rule always to do my very best, whatever be the subject, whether in prose or in verse. When I address my thoughts to the public, I always endeavour to write as if I were writing for posterity: and this is a precious secret, which I would not communicate to the profane vulgar:—it is the secret of *learning* to write well. I will, however, pledge myself some time between now and Christmas to furnish the Society with an essay of some kind. I am very busy with my fugitive poems, to get a small volume out by Christmas; and these exhaust my thinking powers, to polish and perfect them as much as possible."

It was not till the month of April 1806, that Montgomery forwarded the promised essay:—

"It is," says he, "a ramble of thoughts in a very strange field of speculation; I have bewildered myself, and shall lose my readers in it: but if I did not think that it is a subject peculiarly worthy of the consideration of the Philological Society, I would not have ventured to recommend it to them."

On the memorable 21st of October, this year, the gallant Nelson conquered and fell in the service of his country; and the intelligence of his victory and death affected every heart in the kingdom with the force and suddenness of an electric shock. Contemporary with the decisive naval action off Cape Trafalgar was exhibited the widely different spectacle of General Mack with 39,000 Austrians laying down their arms before the walls of Ulm. Some strictures on the campaign in Germany, which issued in this event, and in which real incapacity looked so like

military treachery that the unfortunate general was imprisoned in the citadel of Spielberg, in Bohemia—a stronghold identified with the names of Silvio Pelico and the renowned Baron Trenck—had very nearly involved Montgomery once more in a government prosecution! The menace was formidable: "I never knew," said he, "how this blow missed me, for it was aimed with a cordiality that meant no repetition of the stroke. I had made up my mind to meet it, 'as the anvil meets the hammer'—to avow the sentiments, and stand or fall by them without any other defence than the simple plea of 'Not Guilty.' The death of Lord Nelson probably saved me; for in the next 'Iris,' having to announce that lamentable event, I did it in such a strain of patriotism (in the best sense of *that* word), that my former week's disloyalty was thereafter overlooked.* I have sometimes thought that I was indebted for my escape to the firmness and good sense of a gentleman in authority, who declined to countenance the conspiracy against me." We believe Hugh Parker, Esq., the magistrate, is here meant; and it must be mentioned to the credit of Mr. Robert Hadfield, a respectable merchant, that, immediately on hearing of this threatened prosecution, he sent for Montgomery, and told him to be under no uneasiness with respect to pecuniary consequences, as he meant to bear any expenses that might be incurred. But to the newspaper expiation alluded to:—

"While the cowardly and incapable Mack," says Montgomery†, "was surrendering himself alive into the hands of Bonaparte, the noble and lamented Lord Nelson, once more, and for the last time, fought and conquered the united foes

* It will be recollected that "Ulm and Trafalgar" was the title of one of the few serious poems written by Canning.

† Iris, Nov. 14. 1805.

of his country: but he fell in the meridian of victory,—and in one moment became immortal in both worlds! . . . . Lord Nelson's career of services has been long, but it was only in the middle of the last war that he burst upon the eye of the public as a luminary of the first magnitude. At the battle of Aboukir, he rose like the sun in the east; and like the sun too, after a summer's day of glory, he set in the west at the battle of Trafalgar, leaving the ocean in a blaze as he went down, and in darkness when he had descended. In ages to come, when the stranger who visits our island, shall inquire for the MONUMENT of Nelson, the answer shall be, "*Behold* HIS COUNTRY *which he saved.*"

*That* monument, however, was not thought sufficient by the countrymen of the hero, to record their gratitude and his exploits; a strong feeling was manifested throughout the kingdom in simultaneous resolutions to erect pillars, obelisks, &c., to the memory of the victorious, but fallen, commander. Sheffield, amongst other places, participated in this national emotion; and although eventually no memorial was erected *there*, yet the discussion of the subject furnished to the editor of the "Iris" an occasion for recommending to the notice of his townsman a young artist, at that time without fame or patronage, but who afterwards rose to a position of the very highest eminence in his profession,—a profession to which more than any other we are indebted for the existence and preservation of the noblest imaginary or actual forms of antiquity; the embodiment of a sublime, it may be a momentary, idea in imperishable marble.

Montgomery usually mentioned with great complacency the fact, that Francis Leggit Chantrey* was not

* So his friends wrote the name in full at this period—so we have seen it written by himself. "Leggit," however, which was his mother's maiden name, he afterwards dropped, on discovering

only first introduced to the public through the medium of the "Iris," but that some of the notices of his ability which appeared in that journal were singularly prophetic of his future renown. In the preceding year, Chantrey had visited Sheffield during the recess of the Royal Academy, at which time he advertised his intention of employing his vacation in painting the portraits, or modelling the features, of his townsmen; but, notwithstanding the cheapness and the novelty of this twofold temptation, he painted few portraits, and only executed two or three busts at this time.

The articles to which we have referred on the subject of Chantrey's talents were mostly written by William Carey, already mentioned; a dealer and connoisseur of considerable taste in works of art, and not quite unknown in the circles of literature. In these essays, Chantrey was recommended as the fittest person to undertake the statue of Lord Nelson, which it was intended should surmount the contemplated local monument: and for a time it appeared as if the public were willing to give a practical effect to the scheme.

"The inhabitants of Sheffield," says the writer, "have manifested a public-spirited eagerness to contribute liberally to the erection of a dignified monument within their town, to the memory of their great defender. Fortunately they possess in the Roche Abbey quarries a hard and durable stone, and in Mr. Chantrey a sculptor every way capable of fulfilling their intentions and of reflecting credit on their choice. This young artist, whose modesty and zeal for improvement are equal to his talents, was born so immediately in the vicinity of Sheffield, that its townsmen will probably at no distant period be proud to claim him as a native of their *town*. The power of his hand in executing what he

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that it was not included in the record of his baptism in the parish register at Norton.

sees, and the readiness of his eye in catching a likeness, are exemplified in his admirable busts of the Rev. J. Wilkinson and of Dr. Younge."

In another paper, Mr. Carey, after strongly advocating the merits of Chantrey, says — "Should this young artist be chosen to execute the statue and monument of Lord Nelson, THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY *at this moment involuntarily cries aloud that the work will equally commemorate the taste and spirit of Sheffield, the talents of the artist, with the victories and death of the immortal hero of Aboukir, Copenhagen, and Trafalgar.*" We have printed in italics the words which we find underscored by the editor's pen in a copy of the "Iris" before us, to which is appended the following note, in the handwriting of Montgomery:—"This is a prophetic letter. Chantrey was then scarcely known, even in Sheffield; and as a sculptor he had executed nothing except the two busts alluded to, and another of Mr. Hunt, a painter, and those only in clay. He was painting *half portraits* in oil, the size of life, at four guineas each!"

It was at this period that Chantrey painted the excellent likeness of Montgomery, from which the engraving prefixed to the first volume of these Memoirs of the Poet was taken.

This year* appeared the "Grave,"† and the "Common Lot;"‡ the latter was written on the 4th Nov.,

* In a "Notice to Correspondents," in the "Iris" of Nov. 28., the editor says:—"We have never before seen the 'Lines said to have been written by a LUNATIC with a tobacco pipe on the wall of his prison.' From the manner in which they are sent to us, we cannot tell whether they are *genuine* or even *original*. We care not who was the author, we will speak frankly of them. The four first verses are of no extraordinary merit, and are very ob-

† Works, p. 261. ‡ Ibid. p. 277.

the poet's 34th birth-day, and was, in fact, originally published as a "Birth-day Contemplation." Much as these verses have been admired and quoted, perhaps one of the most unexpected testimonies to the universality of their generic significance is that of Thomas Hood, who, speaking of the peculiarities of his own character in his "Literary Reminiscences," says, "Lamb, on being applied to for a memoir of himself, made answer that it would go into an epigram; and I really believe that I could compress my own into that baker's dozen of lines called a sonnet. Montgomery, indeed, has forestalled the greater part of it in his striking poem on the 'Common Lot.'"

It could hardly appear surprising that the "Grave" should have become the subject of his meditations, and even afford a theme of invocation to his muse, when we recollect that it was Blair's well known poem on this subject which first awakened in Montgomery's bosom

scure; but we are neither ashamed nor afraid to declare, that, in the whole compass of English poetry, there is not to be found a passage more truly, more divinely, sublime than the concluding stanza of this little piece. It is like the arch of Heaven, more majestic in simplicity than all the mountains that it covers in their magnificent variety:—

> "'Tell them I AM,' JEHOVAH said
> To Moses, while earth heard in dread;
> And smitten to the heart,
> At once, above, beneath, around,
> All nature, without voice or sound,
> Replied, 'O LORD! THOU ART.'"

Montgomery soon learned, directly from the widow of the author, what every student of English verse at this day knows, that the foregoing is one of a series of stanzas on "David," written by the unfortunate Christopher Smart. The reader may compare the opinion cited in the above note relative to the merit of these lines with that which preceded the transcription of the same passage twenty years afterwards in the "Christian Poet."

the feelings of poetry; but the fact was, this popular little poem originated in a circumstance, trivial enough in itself, but curious as connected with the history of the verses in question. Montgomery had a favourite English bullfinch, which he purchased from a poor man at Norton, who had taught it to whistle the Scotch air called "Jockey to the Fair," as well as parts of some others. Its notes were exceedingly soft and varied; "not," he observed, "like those of certain wire-throated birds, but rather like the sweet tones of a flute; and when Bully sung, he seemed not so much to modulate with his bill, in the manner of song birds in general, but, as it were, to produce the sounds from his belly in the manner of a ventriloquist." This feathered favourite died, after having been Montgomery's entertaining companion for five years; and the two stanzas at the commencement of the "Grave" were actually written for the purpose of being buried with the bullfinch, and the copy of them was laid aside, and out of sight, a considerable time. Turning them up one day casually, "I thought," said he, "they were too good to be buried; I therefore pursued the train of thought which they elicited, and thus originated the poem." *Holland:* "How did you dispose of the dead bird?" *Montgomery:* "I sealed him up in a paper coffin, with a copy of the verses, and buried him in Cook Wood. There was one verse in the original more particularly lamenting the bullfinch, which of course did not appear in the 'Grave' as published. I do not now recollect it." He seemed to speak of this favourite bird with pleasure. Miss Gales pointed to the hook from which the cage used to be suspended. "Yes," said he, "he used to hang at my ear, when my little study was a part of the shop, and I sometimes brought him into the parlour here, to be more safe from the cat." *Holland:*

"Cowper, you know, has some verses on the death of Lady Throgmorton's bullfinch, which he has terminated very happily with a simile that might easily have become ridiculous." *Montgomery:* "Nobody but Cowper would have managed it so well as he has done." Our friend at this period sometimes took up "the merry flageolet," and amused himself with recalling the notes whistled by the bullfinch, in order to teach them to another bird: in this task, however, he never succeeded. Had the Edinburgh Reviewer been aware of these circumstances, as connected with the origin of the poem of the "Grave," they might have sharpened the keen edge of his ill-nature.

The reader of these pages will not, we trust, be sorry to receive this account of an incident which led to the composition of one of the most touching and popular little pieces in the language. In this, as in every other theme, the poet soon turned from mere external suggestives of his theme to the deep experience and hallowed sympathies of his own heart. A withered flower, a dead bird, or a passing cloud, caught his fancy for a moment; but it was only as the key to emotions which, on being disclosed by the poet, every one of his readers recognised as part and parcel of his own humanity. The "Grave" must have made a lasting impression on the mind of Lord Byron, who has adopted more than the form and cadence of the stanza in what Captain Medwin has published as the "Last Lines" composed by his lordship, and dated on his "thirty-sixth birthday, at Missolonghi, Jan. 22. 1824:—

"If thou regret thy youth, why live?
The land of honourable death
Is here — up to the field, and give
Away thy breath.

"Seek out—less often sought than found—
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest."

Montgomery coincided in this opinion, adding, when the resemblance between these stanzas and his own was pointed out, "I wish I could find the letter addressed to me by Mrs. Burton, in which she mentions the eagerness with which, to her own knowledge, Lord Byron read the volume containing the 'Grave.'"*

* In 1838 appeared a little publication of forty-two verses, and printed at Selby, entitled an "Answer to Montgomery's celebrated Poem of the 'Grave,' by Robert Pleydell Wilson." The "Grave" has, indeed, been an universal favourite with the admirers of Montgomery's poetry; perhaps there is hardly a stanza in the whole range of English metre that has been more frequently and appropriately quoted in the pulpit than that which is comprised in the following extract from an article on the Sheffield Poet, by Robert Gilfillan, author of a "Gallery of Literary Portraits:" —"We will not soon forget the sabbath evening—it was a golden summer-tide — when we first heard his [Montgomery's] 'Grave' repeated, and wept as we heard it. It seemed to come, as it professed to come, from the grave itself — a still, small voice of comfort and of hope, even from that stern abyss. It was a fine and bold idea to turn the great enemy into a comforter, and elicit such a reply, so tender and so submissive, to the challenge, 'O grave, where is thy victory?' Triumphing in prospect over the sun himself, the 'Grave' proclaims the superiority and immunity of the soul:—

"'The sun is but a spark of fire,
A transient meteor in the sky;
The Soul! immortal as its sire,
Shall never die.'

"Surely no well in the wilderness ever sparkled out to the thirsty traveller a voice more musical, more tender, and more cheering, than this which Montgomery educes from the jaws of the narrow house."—*Tait's Mag.*, Sept. 1846, p. 546.

# CHAP. XXVIII.

## 1806.

FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE "WANDERER OF SWITZERLAND."—PLAN OF THE POEM. — ITS FAVOURABLE RECEPTION. — DR. AND MISS AIKIN. — "DEPARTED DAYS." — NOTICE OF THE "WANDERER" IN THE "ECLECTIC REVIEW."—CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE EDITOR, DANIEL PARKEN, AND THE POET. — MONTGOMERY WRITES FOR THE "ECLECTIC."—"LITTLE'S POEMS."— CONVERSATIONS. — LETTERS TO PARKEN. — DEATH OF PITT AND FOX. — THEIR CHARACTERS COMPARED.

THIS year is memorable in the life of Montgomery, as the era of the publication of the "Wanderer of Switzerland," the work with which his name is most familiarly associated, and that which, almost immediately on its first appearance, decided the author's title to a place among the genuine poets of his country.

So little, however, did he foresee the reputation that awaited him, and so negligent was he of the security of his own success, that he suffered the volume, as already intimated, to be three years in passing through his own press, where it was first printed in an edition of five hundred copies. The progress of this work, so important in the poetical and literary history of the author, will justify a somewhat circumstantial detail of facts.

We have before mentioned how it happened that Montgomery was led to adopt the political catastrophe of Switzerland as the ground-work of what was at first meant to be merely a ballad. Whether or not

the subject was a fortunate one, or the stanza in which he resolved to pursue it well chosen, are questions which we may perhaps be allowed to say, have been determined in the affirmative by the success of the experiment. Nevertheless, Montgomery himself was always willing to admit that a variety of circumstances extrinsic to the merit of the poem contributed, in no slight degree, to its early popularity. His own words, in a note to Mr. Holland, are ingenuous. "The original plan," says he, "of a dramatic narrative, for a poem of any length beyond a ballad, was radically wrong; and nothing, perhaps, but a little novelty and the peculiar interest of the subject (at once romantic and familiar to our earliest feelings and prepossessions in favour of liberty, simplicity, the pastoral life, and the innocence of the olden times) could have secured to such a piece any measure of popularity." But to return to the publication.

It was first advertised in the "Iris" of January 9th this year; and in the course of a few weeks, not a copy was to be obtained. By the advice of Vernor and Hood, the London publishers, a second edition of five hundred copies was printed at a metropolitan press: this was announced in July, with a flattering list of reviews, &c., in which the work was favourably noticed.* At this

* The Annual, General, Eclectic, and Anti-Jacobin Reviews; Ladies' Museum; Mirror; Universal, and Monthly Magazines, and others. Several copies of verses appeared in commendation of the poem. Among the rest, an elegant tribute of this kind which, not being of a laudatory character, Montgomery copied into the "Iris," from the "Belfast Chronicle." Of these stanzas, he observed in a heading—"If their own merit be not a sufficient commendation, the editor of the 'Iris' is inexcusable for publishing them." They had, however, another recommendation—that of having been written by the accomplished wife of the Rev. Ignatius Montgomery, and a grand-daughter of the Rev. John

time, Mr. Taylor, a spirited young bookseller, just commencing business, wrote, and offered one hundred pounds for the copyright of the work. Montgomery thankfully acknowledged the liberality of the proposal, but fancying the hazard too great on the part of his correspondent, he politely declined the terms. Meanwhile Dr. Aikin, who had reprinted, with so much commendation, several of Montgomery's pieces in the "Poetical Register," was more than ever charmed with the "Wanderer of Switzerland," and having "ferreted out" the author, by means of a letter to the Rev. H. H. Piper, of Norton*, determined to serve him. To this end he not only addressed to him some complimentary verses in the "Monthly Magazine,"† but recommended him to Longman and Co., the publishers. This respectable firm immediately wrote to the Sheffield poet, offering to take the outstanding copies, and forthwith issue a new and superior edition of a thousand, allowing the author half profits. This arrangement was at once acceded to, much to the satisfaction of all parties; and especially of Miss Lucy Aikin, who, as she said, was "delighted that the loved *Alcæus* was at last found out,"

Gambold, one of the bishops in the Moravian Church. Some complimentary rhymes also appeared in the "Morning Post," by a writer signing "Hafez," better known from the couplet and note in which he is commemorated by Lord Byron, among "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," under his real name of Stott. We only recollect one couplet:—

"Sheffield, with all its works of smoke and fire,
Has nought produced superior to thy lyre."

"As if," said Montgomery's brother Ignatius, "the poet's lyre had been iron, and fabricated by one of the Sheffield artisans, like their celebrated cutlery, by means of the anvil and the file!"

* To whom, on the birth of his first child, Montgomery afterwards addressed the "Roses."—*Works*, p. 282.

† Vol. XX. p. 145.

adding, that she had "sent friendly trumpeters into the polite circles to sound his praise."

In the spring of this year the poet paid a visit to Fulneck; and he has embodied the feelings with which he now retraced, after so long and sad an interval, the scenes of his early life, in "Departed Days, a Rhapsody."* We have briefly described this Moravian establishment in the first volume of these memoirs; and the annexed wood-cut, from a sketch by Mr. W. Nelson, will afford a general idea of the buildings.†

MORAVIAN ESTABLISHMENT, FULNECK, YORKSHIRE.

* Works, 297.

† A large picture of Fulneck, recently lithographed from a drawing by Mr. W. Nelson, is sold by Ackermann; and there is a well-known coloured print, executed many years ago, after a painting by Schwanfelder.

Of the various periodicals in which the "Wanderer of Switzerland" was first noticed, we must more particularly mention the "Eclectic Review," not because the critique which appeared there was written with greater ability, or was of a more laudatory character, than any of the others, but because it was eventually productive of a new and interesting phase in Montgomery's literary life. Dr. Styles, in a memoir of Daniel Parken, Esq.*, says, in reference to this review, and the connections to which it led, "The next intimate, as well as the most distinguished, friend whom Parken gained at a very early period of his editorial career was James Montgomery. The first publication of this child of sensibility and poet of nature was placed for dissection on the critic's table. The author was unknown, and the modest, unimposing form of the volume seemed rather to implore protection than to provoke severity. The perusal of a few pages awakened in the youthful censor [Parken] admiration and delight. He therefore determined to gratify his feelings by writing the notice which should introduce the work to the readers of the 'Eclectic.' In discharging this pleasing task he proved how well able he was to appreciate the genius of the poet, and to sympathise with the sorrows of the man, which the pensive sadness of the poems too evidently revealed. As this critique was introductory to a friendship between minds peculiarly congenial, and which continued with unabated warmth and tenderness till interrupted by death, I shall enrich my pages with a few extracts from it." The Doctor then quotes as follows:—

"There are few names," says Parken," so deeply interesting as that of Switzerland. It is a sound that wakes many a consonant chord in the heart of sensibility. Those that

* Early Blossoms, p. 172.

vibrate the most forcibly are, an attachment to rural life and simple manners, an admiration of natural beauty and sublimity, a love of freedom and of the courage that protects it, a detestation of cruelty, and a horror of oppression. The reader who is tenderly sensible to these feelings will be impatient to see the poems of Mr. Montgomery, when he is assured that he has done justice to such a subject.

"'The "Wanderer of Switzerland,"' says Mr. M., 'the first and longest essay in the collection, has a peculiar claim on the liberality of criticism. Whatever its fate or its character may be, it is neither written in the spirit nor after the manner of any preceding poet. An heroic subject is celebrated in a lyric measure, on a dramatic plan. To unite with the majesty of epic song the fire, rapidity, and compression of the ode, and give to both the grace and variety of earnest impassioned conversation, would be an enlargement of the boundaries of Parnassus. In such an adventure, success is consecrated by the boldness of the first attempt. Under these circumstances, the "Wanderer of Switzerland" will be hospitably received by every lover of the Muses: and, though the poet may have been as unfortunate as his hero, the infirmities of both will be forgiven for the courage which each has displayed.'—*Pref.* pp. 5, 6.

"We envy not the steadiness of eye that can discern minute blemishes in such a poet as Mr. Montgomery. The principal defects in this lyro-drama seem to arise from its very nature. The pen of the writer and the feeling of the reader sometimes languish for a few stanzas: how could it be otherwise?—since languor necessarily follows an excess of pleasure and mental exertion. The metre of the poem is too confined and monotonous for its length; and the conclusion partakes scarcely enough of the catastrophe, to gratify the interest and curiosity which are excited by its dramatic form and singular merit.

"The degree of merit which will be attributed to Mr. M. will differ according to the respective tastes of his readers. He is not so remarkable for brilliancy of expression as for warmth of sentiment: his visions are not cold, feeble, in-

distinct meteors; not phantoms dressed in gaudy and incongruous colours. He not only creates but animates: his images appear in noble simplicity to the eye, and address the heart with impassioned tenderness or sublimity. Those especially who cherish the softer feelings will cheerfully rank Mr. M. among our best contemporary poets, presenting the homage most grateful to his muse, — the tears and emotions of sympathy.

"We had once before an occasion to condemn that morbid sensibility which creates its own sorrows, as highly prejudicial to the performance of active duties. We have also exposed the impiety of those writers who seem to assure to every sufferer on earth a rest among the blest in heaven. In Mr. M.'s poem of the 'Grave,' a mourner is introduced with consummate pathos, resigning himself to his mother earth, and waiting the approach of that hour that should terminate his wretchedness. The 'Grave' is then personified, and introduced to warn him of his folly and danger, and exhort him to 'live, repent, and pray.' As these stanzas have already appeared in print, though perhaps surreptitiously, we can only notice and recommend them to the reader.

"We are very happy to recognise in Mr. Montgomery the *Alcæus* whose lyre has often delighted us. Several of his productions, which are here inserted, appeared some time since in the 'Poetical Register.' Among these we remember the 'Thunderstorm,' the 'Battle of Alexandria,' and the 'Address to the Volunteers,' with particular pleasure. Some of the stanzas in the latter strongly remind us of Collins's beautiful lines, 'How sleep the Brave,' &c. Whether in some particulars Mr. M. has excelled, or only equalled that charming lyrist, the reader must decide. He displays a rich and romantic fancy, a tender heart, a copious and active command of imagery and language, and an irresistible influence over the feelings. At the same time he has set an example, in two less important particulars, which inferior writers will do well to imitate; we allude to the correctness of his rhymes, and his exclusion of heathen mythology from

his compositions. His shorter poems are elegant and tasteful; some of them are highly poetical and interesting; others assume a degree of cheerfulness, yet very much softened by an air of tender melancholy. It is in the higher spheres of sentiment that he touches the chords with the hand of a master.

"From many passages in this volume we presume, and indeed hope, that Mr. M. has had real causes of grief, and that he has not assumed a tone of melancholy, as he might a black coat, from an idea that it was fashionable or becoming.

"We perceive, with no small pleasure, that his heart is not insensible to religious sentiment: we hope that his religion is genuine, as well as warm, not a feeling merely, but a habit; and that his fine talents are devoted to the service of Him 'who giveth the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' Under these impressions, we shall take our leave, cordially wishing him permanent happiness, though it may be at the expense of our gratification and of his poetical celebrity."*

Such warm, but discreet, praise as the foregoing —anonymous as it was—and following, as it did, the "brightest smile of welcome," and the cheering voice of encouragement from Dr. Aikin and others, could not fail to satisfy Montgomery of the legitimacy of his poetical call, even if he had ever entertained doubts on the subject.

"Soon after the appearance of the article in the 'Eclectic,' Parken," says Dr. Styles, "addressed a letter to Mr. Montgomery, requesting his assistance as a writer in that publication. This brought on a correspondence of the most interesting and delightful nature; and, long before the parties were personally known to each other, there subsisted between their minds and hearts a perfect intimacy.

"Mr. Montgomery's first effort as a critic was singularly

* Eclectic Review for 1806, vol. ii. part i. pp. 378—383.

characteristic; it displayed at once a very high degree of intellectual power and Christian principle. The writer of this memoir cannot forget the enthusiasm with which, on their interview, Parken expatiated on the merits of his new auxiliary. Even at that early period of their intercourse he had placed him in his 'heart of hearts.' He loved the man, reverenced the Christian, and admired the writer.

"The article which had inspired him with such sentiments was the review of 'Epistles, Odes, and other Poems,' by an author, *at that time*, only known to the public by the prostitution of a fine genius to the service of immorality. He was just the subject to draw forth the varied excellencies of Montgomery's talents and sentiments, and enabled his new correspondent to form a proper estimate of his mental and moral worth."*

The circumstances which gave birth to the "Eclectic Review" have repeatedly been noticed in the published lives of one and another of its founders and original supporters. All, therefore, that need be said on the subject in this place is that it was intended to occupy, with articles having an evangelical tone and bearing, the ground mostly left void on such subjects by its earlier contemporaries; and although Montgomery was not one of the founders of, or first contributors to, the work, his connection with it belonged to that "palmy period" of its existence when the names of such men as Robert Hall, Adam Clarke, Olinthus Gregory, and John Foster, were associated with his own on the editor's muster-roll.

Daniel Parken, whom we are henceforward to regard as one of the intimate and most endeared friends of Montgomery, was born at Dunstable, in Bedfordshire, and educated for the bar; in 1805 he succeeded the Rev. Samuel Greathead in the editorship of the "Eclectic Review." There was a considerable disparity

* Early Blossoms, p. 178.

between his age and that of his Sheffield correspondent; for, more than twelve months after this period, Dr. Styles expresses surprise, on his first interview with Parken, at the youthful appearance of his friend, stating that he was beyond measure delighted with his pleasing manners and interesting conversation,—Montgomery and his works forming the prominent subjects of discourse. But what Parken lacked in years, he more than realised in talent; he well deserved and warmly cherished the friendship of the poet.

Aware that Montgomery had written for the "Eclectic Review," he was interrogated particularly on the subject. *Everett:* "Dr. Styles, in his 'Early Blossoms,' which Mr. Holland has just shown to me, refers to the commencement of your career as a reviewer." *Montgomery:* "The Doctor is incorrect in his statement. 'Cumberland's Memoirs' were reviewed by me prior to the article he notices, and this was before Parken had any knowledge of the writer. At that time I was known to none but Dr. John Pye Smith; he let out the secret, and I was then solicited to furnish other articles. My friend Parken, Mr. Foster, and myself, had nearly the whole of the Review in our own hands at one period; at least, we were the chief contributors. But after Parken's death I became more shy, and wrote very little for it. The Rev. Robert Hall wrote the critique on Foster's Essays.'" *Everett:* "By the way, were you ever in company with Mr. Foster or Mr. Hall?" *Montgomery:* "Never, with either of them.* Mr. Cottle†, when I was once on a visit at Bristol, drove me

* This was his reply at the time; but some years afterwards he spent an afternoon with Hall, and more than once heard him preach.

† Author of "Alfred," the "Fall of Cambria," &c., and the early friend of Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge.

in a gig to the village where Mr. Foster resided, but we were disappointed of seeing him. He was present at one of my lectures in that city, but did not *show himself.*" *Everett:* "Did the 'Eclectic' remunerate its proprietors?" *Montgomery:* "The first proprietors, I believe, lost considerably by it. Dr. Adam Clarke was one of them." *Everett:* "Will you favour me with a list of the articles which you reviewed?" *Montgomery:* "With all my heart." He then enumerated *thirteen* from memory, which were noted down before him: and, after ruminating and trying to recollect the remainder, he said, "There are others, but I will give you a *written list* of the whole some day." Accordingly he furnished a list of *eighteen* more, observing, "I am really astonished however I found time to write so much during my short connection with the work, and amidst my other pressing engagements."

The earliest letter from Parken to Montgomery, which, we have seen, is dated June 17. 1806, but from an allusion in it to "a draft for friendly services," and other internal evidence, it is clearly not the first which passed between them.

*James Montgomery to Daniel Parken.*

"Sheffield, July 30. 1806.

"DEAR SIR,

"I was exceedingly gratified by the receipt of your favour dated July 24th. Your ready compliance with my request of an acknowledgment of the receipt of my manuscripts was itself a greater kindness than you imagine, for I have so little faith in stage-coaches, that I dreaded a miscarriage of one or both of the parcels as an event very probable, but by no means desirable; for though the contents were written for the public eye, under favour of yours, I certainly should have been dreadfully afflicted if they had

fallen among thieves, and been made the subject of private amusement. I was therefore in hot water till I received information of their safe arrival. I should not have been half so vexed if you had rejected them as if they had perished by the way. But it was the frankness and spirit with which your last letter was written that charmed me, added to the discovery that you are as much a brother poet to me as I am a brother critic to you. I shall be impatient till I see—not what you say I escaped on Thursday morning—but your sweetest song upon your choicest theme, whatever it may be. Concerning my 'Prison Amusements,' I must tell you, in the first place, that they were written when I was very young and very foolish, but very vain and very ambitious. Our friend, Mr. J. P. Smith, can inform you why I was twice sent to prison in the course of twelve months, and you will probably think that I very well deserved the disgrace and punishment, though I have not yet been able to persuade myself so, notwithstanding that my pride has been very much humbled since then, and I have learned to suffer and submit with more patience than I could at that time to unmerited opprobrium. The volume was printed and published under every disadvantage. It was hardly advertised at all in London; and in each of the reviews it received that cold praise which is the passport to oblivion. He is a bold critic in this leaden age who dare, like the writer in the 'Eclectic Review' on the 'Wanderer of Switzerland,' sound the praise of a strange name before the public voice has consecrated it. Our reviewers, in general, hardly ever venture to encourage a rising author, till he has no need of their cowardly plaudits — only bestowed when there is no merit in giving them, and some credit to themselves only to be gained by them. But I am very willing to acknowledge *now* that they behaved to me as liberally as I deserved, for there are many passages and some whole pieces in the volume which my maturer judgment most unmercifully condemns; though there certainly are others of which I neither am nor ought to be ashamed.

I printed 500 copies: about 100 were sold in London, and of the remainder I have only about 20 copies left, so that even if I were disposed to hold up my hand at your critical bar, it would be in vain for you to be severe, for your censure could not injure my sale, and equally in vain would your approbation be, for it could not benefit me. I have sometimes thought of reprinting the first part of the volume, the 'Prison Amusements,' and two or three of the small pieces, with a few corrections, and perhaps some other of my youthful follies, but I fear it would answer no profitable purpose; and the little credit which I have lately obtained might be shaken. You complain justly of my long critiques and short letters—one misfortune has been the occasion of both; I have not had time to abridge the one or to lengthen the other. I live in a tumult of trifles, that harass and worry me on every side; and even in writing this scrawl, I have been interrupted for more than an hour by a sudden requisition to attend in a distant part of the town, concerning *something* that has turned out to be *nothing*, at least nothing to the purpose. I will endeavour in future to mend: but, owing to imperative engagements which I cannot put off, I request you to expect nothing from me next month, except a few paragraphs on the poems of 'Home,' 'Human Life,' and Charlotte Richardson's. . . . On Monday last week I was favoured with a call by Mr. Adam Clarke; I was as much delighted with him in private as I had been astonished at him the preceding evening in the pulpit. I wish I had an opportunity of a more intimate acquaintance with him.

"I am very truly your obliged friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"P.S. Pray do not name me as a critic at Longman's."

August 13. Parken wrote to Montgomery, sending him for review a "dear book," written, says he, "by Moore, Anacreon, Asmodeus, or whom you will;" adding, that "no language can be too severe" in reprobation of the disgrace of "such talents by such

delinquencies" as those exhibited by the poet. He then adverts to the article in the "Edinburgh Review," where the book is dealt with "rather as a political than as a moral nuisance."*

*James Montgomery to Daniel Parken.*

"Sheffield, Aug. 14. 1806.

"DEAR SIR,

"I send you some remarks on 'Home' and 'Human Life;' I also return the volumes. With 'Human Life' you may do what you please; you may take it away by any means in your power, and bury it beneath the epitaph which I have written for it, or you may consign that epitaph with it to immortal oblivion; but spare 'Home:' it is a charming poem, and deserves more than I have said in praise of it. As a favour, if you adopt them at all, pray insert my observations upon it with as little abridgment, or *amendment*, as your better judgment will allow. I do not ask this because my critique does not need correction, but because I think it almost incorrigible; and I am afraid if you improve one part you may ruin another by exposing its baldness. This, however, I will resign to your mercy; nay, even to your justice. Whatever you do, don't make me speak Greek, as one of your learned brethren did in the 'Memoirs of Cumberland;' if you do put the words into my mouth I am determined to make Welsh of them, and spatter them out most ungraciously. It is true that at school, in three years, I learned more Greek than I have been able to forget in five times three, though I have most diligently neglected it, and never looked into a Greek book, with the view of finding meaning in it, during that term;

* This, it will be recollected, was the review which led to the hostile meeting between Jeffrey and Moore, and which was rendered memorable by Lord Byron's allusion to it in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," as well as by the subsequent friendship of the parties to which it led.

but as I yet know so much as to be able to say that I know nothing of it, I hope you will in future excuse me from making a false display of learning to which I have no pretension. With Latin I am a little better acquainted; that is, I am a little less ignorant of Virgil and Cicero than I am of Homer and Demosthenes, so that when the temptation is irresistible, you may fling in a quotation in that tongue, as you did very happily into my 'Groan Extraordinary.' By the by, I never was pleased with that 'Groan,' till I read yours, in which you have so triumphantly outdone me; but I claim half the merit of it, because my bad example provoked you to make a good one. Your printers are as liable to errors as mine, I perceive. I much approve of the enlargement of your review, and congratulate you on the ability with which, in my opinion, the articles in general are written. I have returned Mrs. Richardson's poems, and beg to decline making any comments upon them. As poetry, they are very insignificant; but they breathe the meek and humble spirit of pure Christianity. I think the fourth and fifth verses in the "Prayer for my afflicted Child" are more affecting than anything I ever read in much superior strains. I truly regret that Mrs. Cappe has mingled her sentiments with those of Mrs. Richardson, between which there can be no fellowship; but if the latter must be condemned for the sin of the former, indeed, indeed, I have not the heart to pronounce the sentence. I deliver over the unfortunate culprit to a graver and severer judge than I can be, even if I were to see more danger than I do from Mrs. Cappe's insinuated principles, which appear so frigid and lifeless in comparison with the warm and glowing religion of her friend, that I dread little or nothing from them. I am clear in my conscience that I am not prejudiced in any degree whatever by Mrs. Richardson's having condescended to imitate a very stiff poem of mine, which I wrote at the request of a lady of York, from whom Mrs. Richardson must have had it, for my poem was never published, except in my newspaper, as far as I know and with

Mrs. R. herself I have not the most distant direct or indirect acquaintance. I will not offend you by asking you to forgive this frankness of mine, because I know you will approve it. I am ill qualified to play the sycophant or the hypocrite, and you would despise and detest me if you found me either the one or the other. I desire your good opinion; I have had the happiness to obtain it, and I will endeavour to *keep it by deserving it.*

"I am, very truly,

"Your obliged friend and servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY."

*James Montgomery to Daniel Parken.*

"Sheffield, Sept. 1. 1806.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have taken the earliest opportunity to return Thomas Moore's poems, with as *few* remarks as I could possibly make on them, though you will probably think them too many; but if you knew how much I have curtailed even what I had written, and how much more I have omitted to write at all, which occurred to my mind, and begged hard for admission as evidence against him, you would give me great credit for forbearance. However, your discretion must determine how far this article must be further abridged. It has been the most difficult task which you have yet set me, for as I was restricted, and very justly too, from making extracts, I was obliged to confine myself to very general remarks, and to be as guarded as possible in the expression of them not to *provoke* evil imaginations, while I was endeavouring to *repress* them. The subject is so abominable that it cannot be touched without defilement: but it *must be touched;* and this shameless publication cannot be slightly passed over by you ('Eclectic' Reviewers), as the defenders of that revelation which requires purity of heart and holiness in all manner of conversation. Besides, the work is of uncommon genius; this cannot be denied; nay, it must be *conceded,* lest the world should say you have not the honesty 'to give the Devil his due.' Under these considerations, I can only

assure you that I have done my best—that is my worst—to condemn this profligate volume according to the strictest justice, which would neither ask nor give one grain of allowance, for in this cause I felt it my duty neither to take nor grant any quarter. I therefore endeavoured to admit the full merit of the author's talents, while I did not spare one hair of his demerits as a libertine in principle, and a deliberate seducer in practice. I am so exceedingly depressed in spirit to day, that I can hardly think straightforward, much less write clearly.

"I am, very truly, your obliged friend and servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. D. Parken, London."

*James Montgomery to Joseph Aston.*

"Sheffield, Sept. 6. 1806.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

". . . We have now been correspondents more than twelve years; and in that time you have had many an opportunity of forgiving me for inexcusable offences against the laws of friendship,—but all were sins of *omission only*, because others require trouble to commit them, which, I am not ashamed to say, I am too idle indeed to take. . . . . You can now, with an unincumbered mind, and shoulders disengaged, yoke freely to your new doubled-wheeled waggon (printing and bookselling), and drag it up the 'Hill Difficulty,' with might and main; and if you reach the 'Palace called Beautiful,' at the top, tell the fair damsels who dwell there, 'Faith, Hope, and Charity,' that a fellow-pilgrim of yours, like Christian of yore, weary of climbing, retired into the 'Arbour of Ease,' fell asleep, and, in spite of all your efforts to awake him, still continues slumbering and dreaming away his time, though the 'lions' are unchained and ranging about the mountain, 'seeking whom they may devour.' If you do not perfectly comprehend this fine-spun similitude, look into John Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress.' *I am the sleeper*, who will never reach the 'Palace called Beautiful,'—unless I happen *to walk in my*

*sleep* that way, and *miss* the road into the lion's belly! I thank you for your zealous concern for my poor 'Wanderer,' who has now travelled through most of the Reviews, and been civilly treated by the severest. The Monthly Reviewer has praised my poems as little as he could for the life of him; yet this *commendation*, cold as it is, will not do me any harm; and that is as much as a poet without a *name* can expect. But I am most surprised and delighted with the Critical Reviewer, this month, who, though he has found out that I am a party politician, who have been imprisoned for my 'imprudences,' and 'a fanatic in religion,' has nevertheless, with truly Christian charity, taken great pains to display the merits of my 'Wanderer,' and yet to guard against any encroachment on epic poetry in my new experiments. He has certainly done both himself and me credit by his liberal attention to my talents — whatever they may be; and I will, therefore, freely forgive *his* loyalty, and *his* orthodoxy, though he has levelled his blunderbuss at *mine*. The critique in the 'Annual Review' was indeed a warm and glowing one; and I was the more pleased with it when I learned from Dr. Aikin himself that *he* had no hand in it; but that from it, I might see that I had one other friend as zealous to serve me as he has been. Indeed, I am under deep obligations to his kindness — and pure kindness it is in him, for I was an entire stranger. Yet he sought me out when I was unpatronised, and as unknown to the world as to him, and has recommended my work through the wide circle of his literary friends. This, you must acknowledge, is more than could have been expected of any man, but for a critic — the first critic in the country — to do this is a most rare and precious example of the virtue for which the race are least distinguished, — generosity. But I have no more room than to assure you that

"I am affectionately, your friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. J. Aston, Deansgate, Manchester."

The progress of the present year was marked by the

death of two individuals, whose names were oftener on the lips of political partisans than that of any other person, Bonaparte scarcely excepted. For wherever hostilities might be actually raging, or on whichever side victory by the sword might be won, the destinies of Europe were dependent on the decisions of the British senate, where Pitt and Fox were fighting for war and peace with a generalship not surpassed by the leaders of the armies in the field. The great questions which have subsequently occupied the attention of Parliament, have not been less important, nor the talents of the leaders less conspicuous, than those to which we have previously adverted; but no later ministry has ever so entirely impressed its opinions or the name of its chief on a party, or so nearly divided the influence of the senate for so long a period. Pittite and Foxite were terms which sufficiently indicated the political opinions of the persons to whom they were applied, whether in or out of Parliament. It is not for us, in this place, to pronounce any decision on the claims of the conflicting parties to exclusive patriotism. The adherents of both sides, who are yet alive, have at least yielded their rancour to the softening influence of time. Many of them have seen reason, on other grounds, to revise their old opinions. Neither "All the Blocks" nor "All the Talents" were on one side, whatever the political partisans of either faction may have said or sung to the contrary.*

The Right Hon. William Pitt died on the 23rd of

* One of the authors alluded to surely attributed too *little* influence to democratic literature, when he said—"If every French author had written against a revolution, he could not have averted one. If every English author had written in favour of a revolution, he could not have caused one."—*Preface to "All the Talents,"* p. xii.

January, 1806, and the news reached Sheffield three days afterwards. Montgomery, who had been throughout his political career an anti-Pittite, was far more deeply impressed by the tidings of the decease of the great minister at such a crisis, than elevated by the immediate prospect of seeing a government formed in conjunction with the Whig leader of the House of Commons. In his next "Iris" he wrote—

"Mr. Pitt is dead! Rest to his ashes, and peace to his soul! We shall not sit in judgment on his character; he is no longer accountable to man for his actions, though man must feel the influence of those actions for ages to come. But low in the darkness and silence of the dust to which he is gone down, his ear will be as deaf to the voice of panegyric or of censure as his bones will be insensible to the warmth of the sun that shines upon his grave, or the fury of the tempest that howls over it. Though we have condemned, most deliberately and conscientiously, the general policy of the departed Minister during the last twelve years of his authority, we shall not reproach his memory, at a time when his fall, more than the fate of ten thousand of the multitude, proclaims the value and uncertainty of life. It is by extinguishing in an instant the luminaries of the world, the men whose minds have ruled the counsels of kings, whose hands have held the reins of government, whose breath has been the moving spirit of nations—it is by extinguishing these in an instant that death makes his power universally known,—it is by piercing a heart like Mr. Pitt's, whose pulsation was felt over sea and land through millions of bosoms, that he discovers to each of us the arrow which was launched from his bow at the moment of our birth, and which pursues us with steady, unerring, unceasing decision, through every turning of life, increasing in speed as we fail in strength, till it reaches the mark, and we are, in the twinkling of an eye, as if we had never been.*

* This is a very striking and poetical thought; and it seems to

A few hours ago, every nation in the civilised world had a living interest in the life of Mr. Pitt; and among five hundred millions of his fellow-creatures—the population of Europe, America, the West and East Indies—perhaps there was not one, whether roaming on the banks of the Ganges or mining in the bowels of Peru, who could say, '*I am out of the power of that man.*' Now, to the poorest cipher among the millions, Mr. Pitt is no more than the dream of last night. He was great, it is true, transcendently great; and, in life and in death, a most eminent example how little human greatness is. But we must not expatiate here: we have chosen rather to view Mr. Pitt as a splendid beacon of mortality in his end, than invidiously to scrutinise his deeds, and dishonour his name. In the grave of Lord Nelson, at his interment, were deposited the colours of the 'Victory' under which he fought and fell, and yet conquered; in the grave of Mr. Pitt, at his interment, be deposited the banners

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have dwelt upon the author's mind; for thirteen years afterwards we met with it in the following unpublished lines, entitled—

"*A Fragment.*

"The arrow that shall lay me low,
Was shot from Death's unerring bow
The moment of my breath;
And every footstep I proceed
It tracks me with unceasing speed:
I turn — it meets me: — Death
Has given such instinct to that dart,
It points for ever at my heart.

"And soon of me it must be said,
That I have lived, — that I am dead; —
Of all I leave behind,
A few may weep a little while,
Then bless my memory with a smile. —
O my immortal mind!
When life and death no more shall be,
*Where* wilt thou spend ETERNITY?

"J. MONTGOMERY, 1819."

of the party under which he fought and fell, but did not conquer; with them, too, for ever be consigned to oblivion the standards of opposition, and all the animosities of Englishmen."—*Iris*, Jan. 30.

Of the difference between the old and the new, or, it was then considered, the late and the present ministry, the editor of the "Iris" gave the following just and elegant illustration:—

"The late and present administrations exhibit a most extraordinary contrast: in the former there was one great figure, and many ciphers; in the latter there is scarcely a cipher, but many great figures. Mr. Pitt and his humble companions may be compared to the constellation of the Great Dog, in which there is only one star of superior lustre, and that the most splendid in the hemisphere; when it sets it leaves a chasm in the sky, where its followers are dimly distinguished by the feebleness of their own light. On the other hand, the coalition of genius, now risen upon us, may be said to resemble the neighbouring constellation of Orion, glowing with innumerable stars of every order, and beauty, and magnitude, forming the most glorious assemblage of luminaries in the heavens. We are unwilling to pursue the simile, for the malign and maddening influence of the Dog Star himself is not more celebrated by the poets, than the turbulent and tempestuous aspect of Orion." — *Iris*, Feb. 20. 1806.

Hardly, however, had the new ministry been in existence six months, when the Honourable Charles James Fox followed his political rival to the grave; dying on the 23rd of September, 1806. The news reached Sheffield at a time when two illustrious individuals, destined to carry out, as they in turn occupied the throne of England, the leading principles of the two great rival statesmen—we allude to the Prince of Wales and the Duke

of Clarence — were privately visiting the town, and examining the manufactories, &c.

"The death of Mr. Fox," Montgomery observes, "is one of those events in which the whole human race seems interested, as he was placed on an eminence from which he was conspicuous to all the world. These islands, however, have peculiar cause to mourn his removal at a time when he was negotiating for that peace which they have so long and so unavailingly desired. We were never of the number of those who imagined that the ruin or the salvation of the country depended on Mr. Fox, Mr. Pitt, or any other man, however elevated by rank, or distinguished by talents, but, under Providence, on the public spirit of THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES. Of this opinion we remain, and, much as we wished for the life, and deeply as we deplore the death of this transcendently great man, we fear not for Britain; those on whose conduct her welfare depends still live, and will continue to live so long as the waves shall encircle her shores. Kings, heroes, and statesmen, — Edwards, Henries, Marlboroughs, Nelsons, Pitts, and Foxes,—from time to time arise, flourish, and disappear. The people never die! Then let them know their own dignity; let them depend on their own virtue; let them endeavour, let them deserve to be free and invincible: and till their sea can be dried up, and their rocks crumbled, they shall never be conquered or enslaved." — *Iris*, Sept. 18.

## CHAP. XXIX.

### 1806.

CAREY AND CHANTREY. — MONTGOMERY'S REVIEWS LONG AND INTERESTING. — LETTERS TO PARKEN. — REVIEW OF MOORE'S POEMS. — CONVERSATIONS. — ATTENTION TO RELIGIOUS DUTIES. — METHODIST CLASS MEETINGS. — CHANGE IN HIS HABITS. — NON-SECTARIAN PIETY. — EDITORIAL ANXIETIES. — SUCCESS OF THE "WANDERER OF SWITZERLAND."—WOOLL'S MEMOIRS OF WARTON. — THE "DIAL."— "HARP OF SORROW."— JEU D'ESPRIT.

THE Sheffield project of a local monument to Nelson by Chantrey was, as we have stated, not carried out; but neither Montgomery nor his friend Carey at once gave up the project. "The moment," says the latter, in a letter dated May 19., "I had read your last, I wrote to Chantrey to obtain the information which you required, and I have just now received his answer. He says, 'the expense of a bronze figure eight feet high will be about 450*l.* independent of the other appendages, which cannot be estimated until a model is made.' He expects to be in Sheffield in five or six weeks, to put up Wilkinson's monument. This is all I can say upon the subject, except adding an earnest recommendation to you to create whatever interest you can in favour of Chantrey. I have told him of your zeal in his behalf, and he is indeed thankful for it; and as to your kind offer to print it, I will write upon the subject. I fairly confess I know not what more to say or sing to the good people of Sheffield." How strikingly does the

above estimate for a large bronze statue contrast with the sums received by the artist for similar works in after years!

Parken tells his friend that if his critiques have any fault, it is that they are "too long; and," he adds, "they are at the same time so interesting that I cannot mutilate them."

*James Montgomery to Daniel Parken.*

"Sheffield, Oct. 1. 1806.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"Take the worst news I have to tell you. I have not written a line about Wool's Warton, but indeed I will do my very best to send you the article in ten days, so that, instead of Monday next, do not expect it before Monday se'nnight. If you can forgive this, read forward; if not, throw this letter into the fire, and write me as scolding an answer as you can, and take care that it be charged with treble postage: I will not loose it at the post-office, if it be an angry one, and be less than three full sheets. Now I hold you at defiance; you will cool before you have written one page of hard words against so poor an offender as I am, and the moment you cool I shall be pardoned and received into more gracious favour than ever. Now as I see you are a much more reasonable being than you were a dozen lines ago, hear my apology,—may you never feel it! During the whole of the last month I have been sinking in despondency, till I have hardly had the spirit to languish through my ordinary drudgery of business, and much less to listen to Wool's dull narrative and stupid criticism, which are both so wretchedly neutral, that they can no more provoke than they can delight me; and, unless I am in a rapture or in a rage, I can find neither thoughts nor language to employ for or against an author. I do not intend to tell the public how very humbly I think of this huge quarto, which is as flat and as unmeaning to me as a gravestone with no other inscription than, 'Here lies Joseph Warton, D.D.'

"I cannot engage to furnish you with any remarks on this work in less time than I have named, because I have to go into Derbyshire at the beginning of next week, which will take me away for several days. But I will endeavour to make you amends in the course of the month by sending you a few pages on the 'Life of Colonel Hutchinson,' which fell like a judgment upon me this afternoon for not having dispatched Warton sooner: I never received a parcel before from you that was only half welcome; but this was indeed so, because it reminded me of my transgression, and inflicted a new penance on me, at a time when I am very ill qualified to bear any of 'the miseries of human life.' I will send you one of my newspapers by post to-morrow. You will find in the last page of it a few most melancholy stanzas, breathed, or rather *groaned* out (in the language of Timothy Testy—that is, *you*, when you read this letter, —and Samuel Sensitive, —that is, *me*, while I am writing it) in the bitterness almost of despair, and which have more truth than poetry in them. There are some subjects on which my mind is continually rolling, that forbid me ever to hope for peace on earth, because I am tempted in my gloomy fits to think that I can never find rest for my soul even in the consolations of the Gospel, for I can never forget its threatenings: even on Mount Calvary I hear the thunders of Sinai. But I will not wound your heart on this tremendous theme. By the by, have you seen the 'Critical Review' of August? It praises my little volume most unmercifully; but it has found out that I am a Jacobin in politics, and a fanatic in religion. As for the first accusation, I know how to despise it: and for the second, the reproach of the Cross, would to God that I were worthy of it! —I am glad you think highly of 'Home.' You are right respecting the disposition to depreciate the merits of living poets. I don't choose to refer to my volume here, but for that very reason, ought not the 'Eclectic Review' to set an example of independent judgment, and boldly venture to praise living merit, and to *lead* public opinion, not to *sneak after it*, as most of our reviewers do; who wait to hear what the world has to say about any new author, in whom they

*suspect* there may be merit, though they dare not declare it, at the peril of all their critical reputation, till every body else has acknowledged it. My observations on 'Home' were written without seeing a remark of any body else's upon it, and without being acquainted with a human being but myself who had read it. This, my dear sir, you may rely upon, that I shall always write *my* own judgment, whether it be worth your adoption or no; but I shall be always subject to your curtailments, nay even your utter rejection, when you totally disapprove, so long as I can have confidence in the unbiassed independence of *your* own judgment; for I never will nor can submit to write to the prejudices or the private interests of any party whatever. Your kind information respecting the success of my critique on Dermody gives me a little encouragement: but pray hide my name in the most secret part of your breast, where you conceal your best deeds from every human eye. I have scribbled this as hastily as possible to put you in and out of pain respecting Wool's Warton. My time is expired.

"Farewell. I am truly your affectionate friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. D. Parken."

Montgomery's review of Moore's meretricious verses —seasonably and justly severe as it was—gave very great satisfaction to the readers of the "Eclectic." And not the least so, an allusion in the opening paragraph to the recent duel between the irate poet and one of his critics: —

"Thomas Moore, *ci-devant* Thomas Little, and *soi-disant* Anacreon, holds the strange opinion that reviewers are 'accountable beings,' though he writes as if he were accountable neither to God nor man. Our readers know what a tremendous risk one of the most formidable of our brethren has incurred, by presuming to reprobate the publication of these poems,—less indeed as a personal crime than as a public nuisance. Unawed, however, by so awful a warning,

and neither daring nor deprecating Mr. Moore's displeasure, we shall speak as freely of this gay volume as if the author were neither a man of honour nor a gentleman, but as sincere a coward as the writer of this article has the courage to avow himself." *

There is, perhaps, less of the *critic* than the *moralist* in this review, and for this every reader will find a satisfactory reason in the subject. The warning voice of the *preacher* becomes so audible as we proceed, that it seems to drown almost every other consideration, and we lose sight of every other object except the odiousness of moral evil, and the guilt of those persons who furnish incentives to it. He draws from his arsenal those dread materials which formed the thunder that the prophets and apostles wielded over an unrepenting world: and we cannot but thence infer the faithful character which his ministry would have borne, had it pleased the Divine Being to have given him a frame of might to discharge its functions, and had he himself been as fully convinced of his duty to enter into the sacred office, as his teachers were intent on fitting him for it.

Indeed, when it was observed to him that the review was as much in the language of the preacher as the critic, he replied, "It is properly a moral essay on the immoral character of Moore's poetry, as exhibited in that volume; in this I did as I was requested, and I have not quoted one line of his verse." "Your omission of poetical extracts," it was rejoined, "includes as severe a censure as any of the severe things you have written." Of the genius of Moore, as afterwards more legitimately exercised, Montgomery was always ready to speak as highly as any one.

* Eclectic Review, 1806, vol. ii. p. 310.

"Have I told you yet," writes Parken, "that Moore outdoes all former outdoings? Every person of every species and order of intellect singles out that article, and pesters me with questions about the author. I bid them guess; and they always guess some man whose abilities they consider as supereminent. For instance — a lady of admirable taste, and an old friend, took upon herself to interrogate me for the benefit of the company: and, first, was the author myself? — of course, an unavoidable compliment; was it Robert Hall? was it John Foster, the author of the 'Essays?' No; it was by an unknown somebody, whom I should be proud to name, because I flattered myself I might call him my friend; but I was interdicted, and must be perfectly silent."

*James Montgomery to Daniel Parken.*

"Sheffield, Oct. 14. 1806.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"If your last letter had been less dearly interesting to me I should have answered it sooner, with an apology for not being able to prepare a critique on 'Wool's Memoirs' within the time appointed by myself; but I could not send a cold formal letter of business only (and I have truly had no time to write any other) in reply to one of the warmest and most welcome epistles I ever received in my life. But I must despatch business first. My journey into Derbyshire has been postponed on account of the illness of an old gentleman whom I was going to see; so that *I* as well as *you* made the tour in spirit only; — really I should like to know what our spirits said to one another when they met on the high moors, how they passed their time together, and with what sentiments they parted. I wish we had been present ourselves with them to have heard their conversation, and enjoyed their communion of thought. This is so romantic an idea, and withal to my mind so pleasing a one, that I indulged it amidst all the hurry and vexation of business at home, on Monday and Tuesday last week; but I have no room to expatiate on this vision of friendship any longer. Now what

apology can I offer for not threshing out the 'Memoirs of Warton,' since I remained at home all the week? A very strange one indeed. I have been revising my little volume of poems for a *third edition*, which is called for immediately. Neither I nor my booksellers, I believe, had any hope of the second edition being disposed of at the soonest before mid-summer next. It has been almost entirely sold in little more than two months—1000 copies! There was a time when such unexpected success in that path in which I have been long seeking immortality on earth at the expense of immortality in heaven, would have transported my hopes into the paradise of fools, and raised me in my own imagination to that height of vanity, at which the head grows giddy, and all creation seems to turn round it, as if that poor crazy pate were the centre of gravitation, the axle-tree of the universe—and not a mere humming-top, itself spinning quickest when it appears most at rest. I am not sure that you will clearly comprehend this fine simile, because I am not certain that I understand it myself, though I have a bold guess at what it ought to mean. But I was going to add, that though in my present low estate both of mind and body this success will not turn my brain as it would once have done, yet it has quickened my pulse a little, and made my withered hopes blossom from the dead. I should think my heart mortified and insensible indeed to every generous human feeling, if it had not glowed with unwonted emotion at such unexpected good tidings, because I trust that my little poems which have been received with such great favour will afford none but innocent pleasure to the reader, and therefore may be allowed to afford honest gratification to the writer. However, the tumult on this occasion soon subsided, and I believe I am now nearly sober again; and I take the first lucid interval of reason to write to you, who, I know, will rejoice in this event, for you will see by it that you are not entirely singular in your attachment to my humble muse, though I verily believe that none love her with more sincere and romantic affection. I have consequently been pretty closely employed in my spare

hours in revising, and here and there correcting the copy for the new edition; but I have sent it away, and hope to hear no more about it till the book makes its third appearance in the course of one year, 1806. I am sure that I could not offer any excuse for neglecting your work, which you would more cheerfully admit; but I have another, without which this, imperative and urgent as it was, would not have been satisfactory to my own mind,—you were so indulgent as to say that you did not absolutely require it even at the time which I had limited. But I will now pledge myself anew. You shall certainly have it in the course of the present month, for I shall begin upon it immediately after my next newspaper: and Colonel Hutchinson shall march as soon afterwards as I can equip him. I have not room for another word of business; but I turn with gratitude to the most deeply interesting parts of your letter, on which, however, I must say much less than I think and feel. I was in very deep despondency when your sudden letter came,—sudden I call it, for it darted like an arrow from your heart into mine. It roused, it warmed, it melted me. It arrived, and I read it just as I was going to chapel on Sunday morning, and it well prepared my mind for receiving a consoling sermon. In the afternoon I was obliged to stay at home. I took up a volume of Cennick's most simple, but truly evangelical, sermons, and *opened* to a discourse on the very text which you had sent as the label of your *arrow*, and which had sunk into my soul,—viz., 1 Tim. i. 15. I read it over most eagerly and earnestly, and I was much refreshed and comforted by it. I mention this happy coincidence, because I am sure it will delight you, that you were made on this occasion the messenger of good tidings to me. I am sure that I am not superstitious, but as I am deeply conscious of the omniscience and omnipresence of God, I can never believe that he is an idle spectator of the thoughts, words, actions, and accidents of his creatures. In what manner he interferes with any or with all of these is beyond my comprehension, but that he does sometimes rule them I am compelled to believe; and as we are taught that

every good and perfect gift comes from him, the means through which it comes must be appointed or influenced by him. I did then, and I do now, attribute it to his grace, that these apparent accidents concurred to relieve me, and encourage me to hope in his mercy for final deliverance from one of the sins that most easily besets me — despair; for it is a sin to despair when God proclaims himself to be Love,— despair gives him the lie. You will, notwithstanding this frank avowal of what many would call *fanaticism*, understand that I am no Calvinist: God make me a Christian! and let those that would be more pride themselves in being the followers of men! Among all sects who preach *Christ crucified* the disciples of Jesus are to be found; they are confined *to* none; they are excluded *from* none, at least I trust so.

"Indeed, my dear friend, I have no Methodistical hymns to send you: when I was at school, I wrote many, but I have seldom dared to touch holy things since then. My lips and my heart want purifying with a coal from the altar. Send me some of yours, I beseech you, or some of your other poetry. Farewell!

"JAMES MONTGOMERY.

"N.B.—Did you receive the 'Harp of Sorrow?'

"P.S.—Your letter was delightfully confidential; I have in return transcribed a page of my heart."

In a letter to Parken, dated Nov. 29. 1806, Montgomery says,—

"I have this moment written the last words of my remarks on Col. Hutchinson; but have not time to revise the language so carefully as I ought: but under the very worst circumstances I have done my best to please you. Indeed, I have hardly a quarter of an hour in a day for these subjects, and I am compelled for the present to resist every ordinary temptation that you can offer. The victims which are yet left for execution in my hands shall be brought to justice in the course of four or five weeks; but send me no more at present. I must for three or four months to come

devote my principal attention to money matters. I am woefully behindhand in reviewing my ledgers, day books, and other entertaining works of my own composition, and December the 31st is on the road,—the *last day* of the year, and I am unprepared for judgment. When I have half an hour *good*, that is *sure*, I will write to you at greater length. *You must not confine Hutchinson to eight pages, or you ruin both him and me.* I was never so afraid to look into any book before, and never was better pleased in the result. I had him six weeks I believe before I read beyond the preface. It is a work of most solid worth, abounding with that *kind of thought that begets thought.* It must not be judged by its size, for it is ten times as big a book as it seems to the eye.

"I am very truly, your sincerely obliged friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY."

The following minutes of conversation refer to this period, though they did not take place till long afterwards:—*Montgomery:* "Mr. Milman has advertised a religious poem on 'Polycarp,' Bishop of Antioch. It is well when men of eminent talents come forward with religious subjects, and thus show that religion is no enemy to poetry." *Everett:* "It will form a companion for Gambold's 'Ignatius,' in which there is displayed a great deal of mind." *Montgomery:* "By the by, have you seen Lord Byron's 'Cain?'" *Everett:* "I have read some portions of it, but have not yet found an opportunity to go through it." *Montgomery:* "Like Gambold, he is heavy in his tragedies; but he *has* what Gambold *has not*,—tremendous diabolical sublimity." *Holland:* "He certainly has quite as many terrible as beautiful passages in his works." *Montgomery:* "When I read some parts of Byron, he possesses me like a fiend. He is sometimes obscure; but he soon repays you with vivid flashes or steady splendour. There is such force, such a charm in his verse, that no one can resist him. When I read his 'Cain,' the other day, I

never left off but once, and that was owing to a short interruption." *Everett:* "You have reviewed Scott, Southey, Campbell, Wordsworth, Crabbe, and the other leading poets of the day; why not Lord Byron? He does not, I hope, rise in such giant form before you as to intimidate you? Do try your skill on his poetical majesty. His 'Cain,' from your own account, must be a proper subject for your critical pen." *Montgomery:* "His 'Cain' *is* a fine subject for criticism, and I should feel a pleasure in entering upon it; but I am not in the way of reviewing now. His 'Childe Harold' just appeared about the time I was closing my critical career, otherwise I should have taken him up. *That* work was reviewed in the 'Eclectic,' by Mr. Stephen, the son of James Stephen, Esq., a member of the bar in the West Indies, and Wilberforce's brother-in-law. I have done what I believe no other living poet ever did,—reviewed the whole of my contemporaries, except Lord Byron; and no one can say I have done them injustice.* I am certain I never wrote with a feeling of envy or jealousy." *Everett:* "Your work as a reviewer appears incomplete without Byron. Allow me again to propose him to you, by way of finishing the British poets at the commencement of the nineteenth century." *Montgomery:* "If I were to write a review, I should go through the whole of his Lordship's works: but if I am spared through another year, I shall have sufficient employment without it." †

* Many years after this remark was made and recorded, Mr. Gilfillan bore a voluntary testimony to its truth.—*Tait's Mag.* Sept. 1846.

† Of course, the poems of Lord Byron were duly reviewed in the "Eclectic," as they successively appeared: nor was the noble poet unaware of, even if he were really indifferent to the bearing at least of the earliest of these critiques, which he characterises as "a furious Philippic, not against the *book* but the *author*."

The conversations, in most instances, will fully exculpate Montgomery from the charge of any egotistic desire to make his unacknowledged writings known, as a considerable part of the information was procured by direct inquiry;—an officiousness for which our apology must be our high esteem of the author, and the pleasure of making the reader partake of our information.

We shall refer to the reviews in the regular order of their appearance, and it is only by noticing them here that most of them will be assigned to their proper author; but as the "Eclectic Review" is a work generally accessible, we shall forbear indulging largely in quotations.

It is remarked by Addison, that "there is not anything more absurd than for a man to set up for a critic, without a clear logical head and a good insight into all the parts of learning. True criticism is a liberal and humane art. It is the offspring of good sense and refined taste. It aims at acquiring a just discernment of the real merit of anything said or written. It teaches us, in a word, to admire and to blame with judgment, and not to follow the crowd blindly." Formally to claim for Montgomery the qualifications of a son of Aristarchus as well as of Apollo, is beside our purpose. The reviews themselves will speak for, and others must decide on the validity of his claim to, the character assumed; but we are much mistaken, if that of an *able* as well as *impartial critic* will not be the verdict of the public in his favour.

Montgomery's first essay as a reviewer was, as already noticed, an article on the "Memoirs of Richard Cumberland,"* which exhibits characteristically his tact and talents for this species of writing.

* Eclectic Review, 1806, vol. ii. part i. pp. 414—422.

In it we have especially some pleasing indications of a change of religious sentiment and feeling, producing a corresponding influence on his lighter pursuits. A mere changeling is a pitiable being; and when that change is from bad to worse, the conduct of such a one becomes odious: but there are transformations which are no less signal than laudable. In the estimation of certain parties, any change involves blame; as though it were more honourable to proceed in a reprehensible career than to retreat—more creditable to retain improper opinions than to retract them. Such a sentiment would militate against all scriptural reformation of life or renovation of nature. To persevere in an improper course would be madness; not to recant incorrect opinions the extreme of folly. Montgomery had indulged pretty freely in a trifling application of Scripture incidents and phraseology in the "Whisperer:" but, convinced of its impropriety, he now "severely reprobates" such "sacrilege of phrase," as nothing short of "taking the WORD OF GOD in vain." He had formerly visited and written for the theatre: he now laments over Cumberland for "sacrificing the flower of his talents to objects so exceptionable" as the composition of "*comedies;*" considers the "numerous objections which have been urged against theatrical performances" as "unanswered and unanswerable;" and "seals their condemnation," by affirming that "the manners, characters, conversations, and incidents, which are exhibited at a playhouse are contrary to that purity of heart which the religion of Christ enjoins and requires." It may be proper to observe, however, that theatrical amusements never had such influence upon him as to become a *passion:* and while this proves that this conscientious sacrifice cost him comparatively but ittle, it is no less an acknowledgment of the reality of

the religious impressions of which he was the subject, prior to this period. He occasionally attended for the purpose of obtaining a report for the "Iris." When asked whether he was in the habit of visiting the theatre at the time Mr. Rhodes appeared on the stage in the character of "Alfred?" he replied, "No; that was previous to my coming to Sheffield. Up to the year 1806, I occasionally attended; but it was with many misgivings. I felt that stage plays were dangerously fascinating amusements." This relinquishment might be treated with a smile by the inconsiderate, and with a sneer by the profligate; but the religious and wiser portion of the community will hail it in others, as they did in Montgomery, as the forerunner of a great moral and religious change—like the morning twilight, giving the promise of approaching day.

We are not willing slightly to dismiss this subject, as upon this hinge his religious character partly turns. *Montgomery:* "I was at Norfolk Street Chapel last Thursday* evening, hearing Mr. Leach preach the funeral sermon of William Bush. William was a humble, good Christian; and I am persuaded, Mr. E., if we ever reach heaven, we shall see more of that class of Christians there, who unassumingly and meekly followed the lowly Jesus here,—who himself has left us an example that we should tread in his steps,—than those of greater professions." While uttering the words, "if we ever reach heaven," the tears glistened in his eyes, and his speech faltered. He continued, "We must go to such men as William Bush—men without any pretensions to superior sanctity and superior wisdom, yet possessing both in a sense the most exalted, to learn how to 'walk with God,' like the patriarch of old. In

* March, 1822.

the year 1802, I met a few times in Charles Clarke's class, in the house of old Benjamin Charlesworth, at Bridge Houses, and I think William was one of us. Since then I have often observed and admired him. Poor Charles* strove hard to make a Methodist of me at that time, but could not succeed. Yet never shall I forget the pleasure I felt in those meetings while associating with some of the poorest of Christ's flock. I feel grateful for the kind attentions they paid to my best interests; for they were the only persons who, at that time, 'cared for my soul,' and I have often had to lament that I was not more faithful to the good impressions produced. It was then I began to attend Norfolk Street Chapel, and a change took place in my spiritual character from that time." *Everett:* "I have often been delighted in tracing indications of that change in your writings, from thence to subsequent periods. This was especially the case in a perusal of your review of 'Cumberland's Memoirs,' where you censure with severity his irreverent use of Scripture, which I could not refrain from contrasting with the freedom in which you yourself had indulged in it in the 'Whisperer.'" *Montgomery:* "That book, as I told Archdeacon Wrangham, is at once a monument of my *religion* and my *apostacy;* for *there* may be perceived what I was taught in my youth, and the dreadful use which I made of it. The irreverent use of Scripture in that book affected me more, when I was brought to serious reflection, than

* This good man, conversant as he was with spiritual matters, and anxious as he was too that others should be made, like himself, "unto salvation wise," utterly repudiated the notion of *the earth's motion round the sun!* It might, he said, do for philosophers so to talk, but not for him who, while he daily witnessed the rising and the setting of the sun, read in his Bible that "the world also is established, it cannot be moved."

even the cursing and swearing which I had sometimes ignorantly penned. I never lost sight of the evil, and resolved to correct it as far as I could, and, on the first occasion, by destroying or correcting any writings of mine in which it occurred, however slightly. The practice was not followed by me with a view to bring Scripture into contempt, but unthinkingly. However, I suffered severely for it, when I considered the baneful consequences of such an example; nor do I cease to feel on account of it to this day. For the space of ten years I was in a state of the most dreadful apostacy of spirit, though, in the midst of this departure from God, I had many awful misgivings, and was the subject of the deepest occasional melancholy. Some painful circumstances, especially after my last release from York Castle, led to the most poignant distress of mind."

It was in reference to this departure from his first religious principles and impressions, that he wrote the hymn beginning with

"I left the God of truth and light,"

originally published in the "Evangelical Magazine," and now in the Rev. Thomas Cotterill's Collection, to which Montgomery was a large contributor. To this hymn his friend Daniel Parken referred, when he asked Dr. Styles, "Did I ever show you Montgomery's Hymn?" and then adds, "That is as beautiful as the 'Unique' is sublime."* When the praise of Parken was delicately hinted to him by one of the biographers, he observed, "There are some verses in the original which I will show you some day respecting myself, which perhaps gave the principal interest to it, but

* Early Blossoms, p. 200.—Original Hymns, clxxi.

which are omitted in the published versions." This touching record of Montgomery's religious "experience," at the period referred to, is the first of the original hymns in the "Christian Psalmist."

Before this time, he had ceased to attend those political *symposia* at Mrs. Hill's public-house in the Wicker, where, with his friends Rhodes, Nanson, Bailey, and two or three other persons, he had for some years pretty generally spent his evenings. The party always sat in a small room apart from other company, and conversation on the topics of the day, including literature, science, and the fine arts, was the charm which drew and kept them together; while the pipe and the glass were rather the symbols and the fetters of a bad habit than the media of any thing like intemperance. But when Montgomery, like the prodigal in the Gospel, "came to himself," so to speak, and began to reflect on his position from a moral and religious as well as from an intellectual point of view, he felt strong misgivings as to the propriety of maintaining his title to such flattering good-fellowship, at such an expense of time, conscience, and self-respect. In this state of mind, preparing one evening to go and meet his friends as usual, he took down his top-coat—so he told our common friend Mr. Blackwell—but instead of putting it on, he reflected, hesitated, resolved; and, hanging it up again on the peg, took his seat at his own fireside, and never resumed his visits to the Wicker.

Of Montgomery's personal piety, and of his earnestness in the cause of religion generally, as well as of his almost life-long attachment to the worship and labours of the Methodists, these pages will henceforward afford abundant evidence. Nevertheless, we may here remark that we cannot but regard it as a happy circumstance for the town in which he resided, whatever it may have

been for the poet himself, that when he returned to those paths of godliness from which since boyhood he had wandered, there was no Moravian community in Sheffield; and, next to this, the fact that he did not immediately join himself to any other religious party. It is not, by this remark, intended to underrate the importance of "the communion of saints" in any section of the Christian church, much less to disparage the Catholic character of the Brethrens' Unity; but occupying such an important public position as he presently did, through the threefold agency of his newspaper, his poetry, and his public speaking, it must be attributed mainly to the circumstance above mentioned, that his benevolent influence, instead of being confined to any one party, was so widely felt and acknowledged. We never knew a man of equal piety and intelligence, whose conduct and sentiments were at once so decidedly evangelical, and so signally unsectarian. Hence he joined freely and frequently in public worship with Churchmen, Independents, Baptists, and Methodists; co-operating with them, as we shall find, in all their directly religious objects; while with Romanists, Unitarians, and Quakers, he was a cordial and conscientious fellow-labourer in the wide field of local charity, popular education, and general philanthropy. After such a statement, it need hardly be added, that he enjoyed the personal friendship of individuals belonging to every religious denomination.

The anxieties, mortifications, and heartburnings attending the responsible management of a country newspaper at the period here referred to, can only be adequately conceived by those who have experienced them. Placed in the immediate vicinity, and commonly at the mercy—or rather the caprice—of their supporters, witty and malicious as well as interested

individuals too often seek and expect to be allowed to attack each other through the sides of the poor journalist. This evil is rendered at least in a three-fold degree vexatious, when the same individual is editor, proprietor, and publisher, as was the case with Montgomery. It is an easy thing with one who may have "much malice and a little wit," in an anonymous manner, to write daggers at the heart or the reputation of a townsman; and Montgomery, whose independence taught him to scorn alike the services and the wages of faction, was frequently exposed to these attacks, especially at the commencement of his editorial career. Towards the latter end of this year, an individual sought to annoy him, in this manner, by two or three sneering letters, insinuating that he had omitted, for some private reason, to publish in the "Iris" the humane proclamation of Sir John Stuart, after the battle of Maida; alleging, moreover, that the plurality of interests in the proprietorship of the paper prevented the editor from acting for himself, and threatening him at the same time with the establishment of a rival publication less under the control of a party. To these assertions Montgomery replied in the following spirited paragraph. Having stated that from 1795 the "Iris" had been the undivided, unconnected, uncontrolled property of the person whose name appeared on the face of it, and that, from the above-mentioned period to the present, he had acted entirely from the conviction of his own mind, as printer, publisher, editor, and sole proprietor of the same, Montgomery adds:—

"The writer of these lines has often been menaced with opposition from such a dark cabal; and if in the issue his paper shall be overthrown by cowardly intriguers,—be it

so! By such men it were more glorious to be ruined than to be raised. If such a fate be in store for the 'editor of the Iris,' it will be his consolation, it will be their disappointment, that when he does fall, he will fall as he has stood —ALONE."—*Iris*, Oct. 23. 1806.

Accustomed as he had been to anonymous and open assailants, their aspersions were generally, "like dewdrops on the lion's mane," shaken off on the first rising of the noble spirit. Montgomery's exquisite nervous sensibility often, indeed, rendered such attacks more irritating for the moment than they would have proved to one of sterner mould; but most commonly, as soon as he could rally the powers of his mind, and his judgment obtained its proper ascendency over his feelings, he was sure to appear in the true dignity and independency of his character.

So generally acknowledged were the merits of the "Wanderer of Switzerland" and the "Other Poems" which accompanied it, that Longman's edition—the third—was published in November this year. To the disinterested zeal of strangers, the accidental popularity of the leading poem, and the unexpected patronage of a class of readers to whom the author had previously been but little or unfavourably known, he gratefully attributed this success.

"By the common consent of the periodical critics," says the Preface, "who have reviewed this little performance, the author has failed of accomplishing the object which he professes to have had in view; but they unanimously allow that he has succeeded in producing a piece which is neither unpoetical nor unpleasing in subject, form, or style; and, it may be added, the anticipation at the close of the preceding paragraph, which, indeed, existed rather in the wishes than in the hopes of the writer, has been unexpectedly verified. The 'Wanderer of Switzerland' *has been* 'hospitably en-

tertained by the lovers of the Muses.' With this decision the author has no right to be dissatisfied; but neither the present nor any future failure, accompanied by such soothing approbation, shall ever discourage him from aiming at the greatest things within the scope of his imagination to conceive, that he may *thereby* reach the highest within the the power of his genius to execute. A poet ought never to narrow his mind to the compass of his skill; nor consider the horizon of his talents to-day as the boundary of his prospect to-morrow."

The concluding sentences of this extract betray the aspirations of a mind evidently conscious of its powers: they were, indeed, prophetic of the success which awaited themes at this time unattempted and unconceived by Montgomery. His literary prospects were indeed brilliant and extensive, and his claim to the rewards of poetical distinction indisputable: in short, his name was fairly inscribed on the living bard-roll of his country.

The "Eclectic" for December 1806 opens with Montgomery's review of Wooll's "Memoirs of Joseph Warton, D.D.," and with which the writer declares himself to have been "miserably disappointed;" adding, that the biographer "has executed his task with as much labour in vain as we ever saw bestowed on a good subject." Of Warton's poetry our friend did not entertain a high opinion; he considered it to be deficient in warmth of feeling, originality of ideas, and congruity of illustration. As an exemplification of the last-named defect, he adduces an instance, which may afford a hint to a certain class of experimenters in verse, who have not always the plea of youth to urge in extenuation of their fault. Speaking of Warton's poem, the "Enthusiast, or the Lover of Nature," the reviewer says:—

"Who but a student, poring over the beauties of nature

through the 'spectacles of books,' amidst the twilight of a college, would have commenced a poem, in which he has assumed this character of *her* lover, with the frigid apostrophe,—

> '*Ye green-robed dryads,* oft at dusky eve
> *By wondering shepherds seen!*'

"The introduction of the dryads in any English poem would be sufficiently pedantic; but to address them as being 'often seen by wondering shepherds' of this age, and in this country, who never heard of their classical existence, is an intolerable anachronism of absurdity. There is a *truth in fiction*—the *truth of propriety*, of which no poetical licence can justify the violation. Had the author called upon the *fairies*, as being 'often seen' by modern 'shepherds,' there would have been this *truth of propriety* in the invocation of them, because, though the fact assumed would have been no less fiction in itself, yet such things *do* still exist in popular superstition."*

Of Warton's skill as a critic, the reviewer entertains a higher opinion, characterising the "Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope" as "one of the boldest and most successful adventures in modern criticism."

The only verses which he appears to have printed this year, besides the "Wanderer of Switzerland" and "Departed Days," already mentioned, were an "Inscription" for a sun-dial†, and the "Harp of Sorrow;"‡ probably also a translation of the following lines, which appeared in the "Iris" of April 3rd, is from his pen:—

> "Jupiter, Brave, Alexandre§,
> Duckworth les a fait se rendre:

* Eclectic Review, vol. ii. part ii. p. 967., 1806.
† Works, p. 282. ‡ Ibid. p. 278.
§ In the next week's paper the editor says, "We give the fol-

Que fera Napoléon sans eux?
N'est-il pas en état affreux?
Sans Dieux, sans héros, et sans braves,
Ils ne lui restent que d'esclaves."

We believe that, notwithstanding the attention which Montgomery paid at this time to elegant literature in prose and verse, his business as a general printer, as well as his publication of the "Iris," went on regularly and successfully, his own want of zeal as a mere man of business notwithstanding. In a letter before us, chiefly relating to money matters, addressed by him to his early partner, Mr. Naylor, he indulges in the following uncalled-for severity of self-reproach :—

"My business during the last year has been pretty good upon the whole; indeed, when I reflect properly, it would be monstrous ingratitude in me to complain of any thing or anybody in it, except of myself: I am very listless and negligent of these concerns, notwithstanding so much of the future comfort and independence of my life is involved in them. Had I been only moderately industrious, you would have had less reason to complain of my unfaithfulness to my legal engagements with you; but I should also have had less opportunity of experiencing your kindness and forbearance towards me, and of feeling, as I do most ardently, sincere gratitude to you for manifold proofs of your goodness. But you have too long known both my imbecility of mind and

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lowing imitation of the jeu d'esprit in our last; if the reader thinks it a bad one, we can show him half a dozen worse :—

'The *Brave*, *Alexander*, and *Jove*,
In vain against Englishmen strove,
By Duckworth o'ercome on the waves:
Of his *God* and his *Heroes* bereft,
What now has Napoleon left
To defend — to *desert* him,—but *slaves*?'"

infirmity of body to require any explanation of this unfortunate, and, in reality, this unjust disposition. But I ought to have much to keep me humble, for I have many temptations to be proud; and pride has hitherto been a most dangerous and dreadful enemy to my peace. Pray, give my kindest and most respectful regards to Mrs. Naylor: may those of her little ones who are still around her be more precious on account of the absence of those who are removed to a safer situation; and may they live to reward all her love and all her sorrow." *

* Letter to Naylor, Jan. 17. 1807.

# CHAP. XXX.

## 1807.

BUSINESS AFFAIRS. — LETTER FROM DR. AIKIN. — LETTER TO PARKEN. — "LIFE OF COLONEL HUTCHINSON." — EDINBURGH REVIEW OF THE "WANDERER OF SWITZERLAND," WRITTEN BY JEFFREY. — VATICIDE. — MISS AIKIN'S VERSES. — LETTER TO ASTON. — PROPOSED NEW SHEFFIELD NEWSPAPER. — LETTERS TO PARKEN.

On the 26th of January, Parken wrote a long letter to Montgomery, combining topics of friendship and business, — the titles of books for reviewal, and the indulgence of an expectation that he should soon see the "pale face" of his correspondent in London; at the same time praising his poem of the "Molehill." This expectation and this praise were reiterated by other friends.

*Dr. Aikin to James Montgomery.*

"Stoke Newington, Jan. 29. 1807.

"Dear Sir,

"Your last letter relating chiefly to the third edition of your poems, I did not feel that it required a particular answer; and having been much occupied with the 'Athenæum,' and other concerns, I was not disposed to write more than was necessary. The interval of your correspondence now, however, seems so long, that I am impatient for its renewal; and, besides, I owe you an acknowledgment for the lustre you have thrown upon our first number by your 'Molehill.' It has, I assure you, been much admired, and been judged worthy of its author. My friend, Mr. Roscoe, told me he

recognised the muse of Montgomery in the first stanza. I know not how to urge you for future contributions, since you ought to have in view a second volume of *virgin* pieces; but whatever you may think fit to bestow on us will meet with a cordial welcome. You will see the 'Sequel to Hannah,' of which you have been pleased to judge so favourably, in the second number. I thank you for your endeavours to serve the work.

"I know not how to condole with you on the increased occupation of your time, that the discovery of your merits by the world has brought upon you. If the effects are somewhat burthensome, the cause is such that your friends cannot lament it. I will hope, however, I shall not be a sufferer from the additional correspondents you are obliged to entertain, but that you will continue to favour me with those confidential displays of your mind which have been so delightful to me.

"We often indulge ourselves with the vague expectation that you will sometime find the call of business or inclination strong enough to induce you to visit London, notwithstanding all obstacles. I scarcely need to assure you that few circumstances would give me so much pleasure as the opportunity of forming a personal acquaintance with you. If you could be persuaded to become a guest in my house, you would find a whole family prepared to regard you rather as an old friend than a stranger.

"Accept our united respects and kind wishes, and believe me, dear sir,

"Yours, most sincerely,
"J. AIKIN."

*James Montgomery to Daniel Parken.*

"Sheffield, Jan. 29. 1807.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"Since I wrote in wild fire some weeks before last Christmas, I have not penned a syllable of criticism, and have only found time to run yawning all the way through 'Molleson's Miscellanies,' and to rub my eyes pretty briskly

over the four first pages of 'Herbert's Translations.' Madame Maintenon I have cut open, but you must excuse me from cutting her up, for I cannot bring my mind to look at her. I have only read the title page, and, unless you positively require it, I will read no further, but return her by the first parcel which I shall have to send. She may be a very good and clever lady, but I am frightened at her, because, from the terms in which you introduced her to me, I thought that you wished ample justice to be done to her, and you desired me to sketch a parallel between her and Catherine of Russia. Now, in plain truth, I am so little acquainted with the history of these two tremendous women, that it would take a great deal of time and study, neither of which I am inclined to afford at present to these subjects, in order to prepare myself merely to read over these volumes, in which I perceive that fact and fable are tied together neck and heels, like a dead and living body, and it would require more discrimination than I have to separate them. I have not leisure to pick grains of wheat out of bushels of chaff as a *task*, though, from perversity of choice, such has been my daily employment through life; but then a man has a right to plague himself as much as he pleases, though he does not choose to let his friends plague him even in his own way. If you forgive this act of rebellion, you will be the most merciful master I ever served. I had almost forgot to say that I will send you a page about Molleson, and a short article, perhaps three pages, about Herbert, in the course of next week, or on Monday se'nnight at latest. Scott, I presume, will do at the end of the month. I will take *some pains* with him, and not exceed four or five pages at the uttermost. I have hardly time to thank you for the most valuable parts of your letter, but they are written in my heart in facsimile characters from their prototypes in yours. If you want to know a little more concerning me, than it is my interest to reveal to the world, but which I cannot prevent being told, I believe you will find some account of my life in the next 'Monthly Mirror,' written at the urgent request of the publishers by a friend of mine in Sheffield. I have no further share in the

article than being the subject of it, and having settled the dates in my friend's *narrative;* for his *criticisms*, which he informs me he has sent, were written without consulting my opinion of what ought to be said concerning me. Farewell.

"I am very truly your friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY."

His first "Eclectic" contribution printed this year was a review of the "Life of Colonel Hutchinson, Governor of Nottingham Castle, at the Period of the Civil War," a book of so delightful a character, that it seems to have communicated a charm to the pen of Montgomery.

"This work," says he, "is recovered from the ruins of time, like a precious piece of sculpture from the ruins of Herculaneum. Sullied with the mould of years, and antiquated with the change of costume, its first appearance is uncouth and unattractive; but on closer examination its graces steal forth imperceptibly, its beauties are multiplied and magnified on the eye, which continues to gaze with improving delight till the image before it has revealed all its grand and simple proportions, and looks, as it sprang from the brain of the author, 'a goddess armed,' —*a statue of thought*, exhibiting, at one view, the character, the genius, the history, of a romantic and turbulent age! Had this volume been published in its own day, its merits would have raised it to a high rank among contemporary histories, and it probably would have been transmitted with honour to posterity; yet amidst the rich inheritance which that age *did* bequeath to after times, it is possible that this legacy might have been unworthily estimated and little regarded. But now being given to a generation unborn when it was written, it appears with the double and rare advantage of both novelty and antiquity to recommend it. Those who are tempted by these recommendations to read it will not be disappointed: but *we* were disappointed; for we opened it with the yawning expectation of having to drawl through the dulness of a piece of

local, temporary, family history, as little interesting as the praises of dead husbands by disconsolate widows frequently are. It is unnecessary to explain why we were thus prejudiced; how delightful then was our *disappointment* when we discovered that we were not wading, barefoot and ancle-deep only, down the channel of a shallow rivulet brawling over gravel-stones, but found ourselves borne on the current of a broad deep river, that frequently overflowed its banks, but never sunk below them." *

The work, of which this is a review, refers to an important era in British history; and on political matters, which at the period in question were momentous and distracting, Montgomery, when he can overcome his aversion to such themes, appears to advantage, and manifests equal acuteness, candour, and extent of knowledge. It is not difficult to perceive, in some of his remarks, an inkling of his own political creed: and when he speaks of Colonel Hutchinson's imprisonment, with its causes and effects, the remembrance of his own incarceration seems to rush into his mind, and he at once associates himself with the illustrious hero, in the indignation and sympathy of a fellow sufferer.

We must now turn from Montgomery in the chair, to Montgomery at the bar, of criticism,—a transition for which, as to the manner of it, the poet was at the time quite as little prepared as the public. Indeed, the tranquillity and sunshine which seemed to beautify every aspect of the literary horizon to his eyes, at the close of the last year, were but ill calculated to premonish him of the rude northern blast which he was destined to experience at the beginning of this. We allude to the memorable critique on the "Wanderer of Switzerland," in the "Edinburgh Review." This celebrated

* Eclectic Review, vol. iii. p. 16—25., 1807.

journal was set on foot by individuals whose objects at first were fame and influence rather than emolument. Anonymous, reckless, entrenched in the stronghold of party politics, and commanding no inconsiderable portion of the rising genius of North Britain — to say nothing of acquired auxiliaries in the south, — they wrote for a time with all the usual confidence of young and clever men, and with a daring peculiar to great and unchastised success.

It is however manifestly next to impossible for criticism on living authors to be very spirited — not to say vindictive — and very long continued, if the name of the writer be known. Violent attacks and vindictive personalities may of course take a sharper edge and afford more entertainment to a looker-on when the parties come forward *in propriâ personâ;* but in general it is the policy, as well as the practice, of contemporary reviewers to exercise their craft anonymously. In this, however, as in most other similar matters, *tempus omnia revelat,* especially in an age so eager and communicative as ours; and thus the mystery which for so many years attached to the authorship of the leading articles in the "Edinburgh" has long since been dissipated, — in part by voluntary disclosures of the writers themselves, but mainly by the publication of posthumous memoirs. From these sources we learn not only the part taken by Jeffrey, Horner, Brougham, Smith, Allen, Brown, &c., in starting the work, but the names of their principal confederates, and the specific contributions of their several pens. To say that the once formidable periodical which embodied collectively the genius of such men in its earliest and freshest development, no longer exercises its original influence for good or for evil, either in literature or politics, is

merely to acknowledge the meliorating effect of innumerable causes which have acted less powerfully to change the vocation of the critic, than to modify the entire mass of present readers and writers.

Lord Cockburn, in his "Life of Jeffrey," admits the charge often made against the Review, "That condemnation was its enjoyment; and that its authors sought for distinctions, not in the discovery and encouragement of merit, but in the detection and exposure of defects; and that while rioting in the delight of their power, the interests of the victim were disregarded, &c., is not altogether groundless." Jeffrey himself says, in a letter to Horner, "We should make one or two examples of great delinquents in every number." Under the influence of these motives, the patriotic author of a genuine poem in praise of liberty, and moreover, a "brother Scot," was thus welcomed by the liberal editor of the "Edinburgh Review."*

"We took compassion upon Mr. Montgomery on his first appearance, conceiving him to be some slender youth of seventeen, intoxicated with weak tea † and the praises of sentimental ensigns ‡, and other provincial literati, and tempted, in

* In the "Life of Jeffrey," vol. i. pp. 285. 420., the fact that *he* was the writer of the article on the "Wanderer of Switzerland," as Montgomery always supposed, is placed beyond dispute.

† This flippant remark contained more meaning than the writer was aware of; for only a few months previously, Parken, in one of his letters to Montgomery, says:—"Mr. Adam Clarke imputes your low spirits to drinking tea; did he recommend you to do as he does, exchange it for a decoction of camomile, used exactly in the same manner?" Whether such advice was given or not, we cannot say; *we* have, at least, often had reason to be glad that it was never followed.

‡ It is amusing to see how egregiously this second-hand sneer is misdirected as flung at a man who had so recently been twice fined

that situation, to commit a feeble outrage on the public, of which the recollection would be a sufficient punishment. A third edition, however, is too alarming to be passed over in silence; and though we are perfectly persuaded that in less than three years nobody will know the name of the 'Wanderer of Switzerland,' or any of the other poems in this collection, still we think ourselves called on to interfere to prevent, as far as in us lies, the mischief that may arise from the intermediate prevalence of so distressing an epidemic. It is hard to say what numbers of ingenuous youth may be led to expose themselves in public, by the success of this performance, or what addition may be made in a few months to that great sinking fund of bad taste, which is daily wearing down the debt which we have so long owed to the classical writers of antiquity.

"After all, we believe it scarcely possible to sell three editions of a work absolutely without merit; and Mr. Montgomery has the merit of smooth versification, blameless morality, and a sort of sickly affectation of delicacy and fine feelings, which is apt to impose on the amiable part of the young and the illiterate. The wonder with us is, how these qualities should still excite any portion of admiration; for there is no mistake more gross, or more palpable, than that it requires any extraordinary talents to write tolerable verses upon ordinary subjects. On the contrary, we are persuaded that this is an accomplishment which may be acquired more certainly and more speedily than most of those to which the studies of youth are directed, and in which mere industry will always be able to secure a certain degree of excellence. There are few young men who have the slightest tincture of literary ambition who have not, at some time in their lives, indited middling verses; and accordingly, in the instructed classes of society, there is nothing more nauseated than middling poetry. The truth

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and imprisoned, and had twice narrowly escaped prosecutions for imputed affronts to the soldierly spirit!

is, however, that the diligent readers of poetry in this country are by no means instructed. They consist chiefly of young, half-educated women, sickly tradesmen, and enamoured apprentices. To such persons the faculty of composing rhyme always appears little less than miraculous, and if the verses be tolerably melodious, and contain a sufficient quantity of those exaggerated phrases, with which they have become familiar at the playhouse and the circulating library, they have a fair chance of being extolled with unmeasured praises, till supplanted by some newer or more fashionable object of idolatry. These are the true poetical consumers of a community—the persons who take off editions, and create a demand for nonsense, which the improved ingenuity of the times can with difficulty supply. It is in the increasing number and luxury of this class of readers, that we must seek for the solution of such a phenomenon as a third edition of the 'Wanderer of Switzerland,' within six months from the appearance of the first. The perishable nature of the celebrity which is derived from this kind of patronage, may be accounted for as easily, from the character and condition of those who confer it. The girls grow up into women, and occupy themselves in suckling their children, or scolding their servants; the tradesmen take to drinking or to honest industry; and the lovers, when metamorphosed into husbands, lay aside their poetical favourites with their thin shoes and perfumed handkerchiefs. All of them grow ashamed of their admiration in a reasonably short time, and no more think of imposing the taste than the dress of their youth upon a succeeding generation.

"Mr. Montgomery is one of the most musical and melancholy fine gentlemen we have lately descried on the lower slopes of Parnassus. He is very weakly, very finical, and very affected. His affectations, too, are the most usual, and the most offensive of those that are commonly met with in the species to which he belongs. They are affectations of extreme tenderness and delicacy, and of great energy and enthusiasm. Whenever he does not whine he must rant.

The scanty stream of his genius is never allowed to steal quietly along its channel, but is either poured out in melancholy tears, or thrown up to heaven in all the frothy magnificence of tiny jets and artificial commotions."

Nothing is more easy than to turn into jest any subject, sacred or common—to ridicule any tender expression, secular or scriptural. This principle, or rather this want of principle, is evinced by a series of extracts from the "Wanderer;" and the reviewer, having pretty well exhausted his merriment by quoting and commenting on the minor pieces, especially the "Pillow," thus concludes:—

"We cannot laugh at this any longer, and feel ourselves compelled to ask pardon of our readers for having detained them so long with these paltry affectations. The passages we have already exhibited will probably be sufficient to justify our estimate of the volume, and to confirm the theory by which we have attempted to account for its success. After all, however, it is still a little strange, and not a little humiliating, to think that, at a period when we have more eminent poetical writers than have appeared together for upwards of a century, such a performance as this should rise into any degree of public favour. When every day is bringing forth some new work from the pen of Scott, Campbell, Rogers, Baillie, Sotheby, Wordsworth, or Southey, it is natural to feel some disgust at the undistinguishing voracity which can swallow down three editions of songs to convivial societies, and verses to a pillow." *

There are two assertions in this notable article which seem to require a passing remark. In the first, the poet is charged with "a sort of sickly affectation of delicacy and fine feelings;" and again, "his affectations, too, are the most usual and the most offensive of

* Edinburgh Review, No. XVIII. Jan. 1807.

those that are commonly met with in the species to which he belongs: they are affectations of extreme tenderness and delicacy, and of great energy and enthusiasm." Right or wrong, blameable or praiseworthy, capable of correction or otherwise, these qualities were not, at any rate, *affected;* so far from that, in no person, we are persuaded, did they ever exist in a more real and intense form than in James Montgomery. The other assertion of the reviewer is, "that in less than three years, nobody will know the name of the 'Wanderer of Switzerland,' or any of the other poems in this collection." The pretenders even to critical infallibility never subject their credit to a more perilous test than when they lay claim to the gift of prophecy: there are few dogmas so monstrous, few sentiments so absurd, but may be explained by sophism, or maintained by pertinacity; but when an individual ventures to foretell the issue of events which he can neither really control nor certainly foresee, he acts, at least, unfaithfully towards his own reputation. Every person can laugh at the failure of a confident prediction, though all cannot apprehend the futility of sophistical reasoning. The judgment of the public on the subject of this volume was at the time, and afterwards, so completely opposed to the sentence pronounced in the "Edinburgh Review," that Montgomery himself observed to us, in January, 1822, "Notwithstanding the prediction so confidently recorded in the 'Edinburgh Review,' that in three years 'neither the author nor his book will be remembered,' almost twenty years have since elapsed, and I am not yet forgotten; nay, I have this very day seen an advertisement of the ninth London edition of the 'Wanderer of Switzerland!' This work has, in fact, produced to me upwards of 800*l.*, and more than *twelve thousand copies* have been

sold, besides about a score of editions printed in America."

Montgomery himself, although far enough from being insensible to the immediate effects of this envenomed attack, was equally persuaded of its ultimate futility. Indeed, he not only never felt the least hesitation to converse about the review, but, at an early period of our intimacy, lent us the copy from which the preceding transcript was made; its marginal spaces were filled with short-hand notes, which we could not then decipher; and on our sportively asking for a translation, he said, "that is my unpublished defence." At an early period Walter Scott conveyed in a message to Montgomery a compliment, evidently intended to prevent the notion of his sympathy with the offensive article; while another gentleman connected with the review directly disclaimed all knowledge of the authorship; and it is a little curious that Jeffrey himself not only afterwards attended a literary festival where the health of Montgomery was drunk, to the exclusion of some of the "great names" mentioned at the conclusion of the critique*, but, as we happen to know, so

* At least, so we are told in "Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk," a work understood to have been written by Mr. Lockhart. The healths, it appears, had been arranged by the stewards and their friends; and among the names omitted were Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge! The gentlemen who took the chief management, were keen Whigs. "Not one of those Edinburgh Reviewers had the common candour or manliness, in a meeting the object of which was so purely to do honour to poetical genius," to propose the health of any of these poets. While Peter thus speaks, he forgets not to add, though mixed with a sneer, "I am indeed very much at a loss to comprehend how any man of intelligence could satisfy his conscience that he did right in proposing on such an occasion as this the healths of Crabbe, Rogers, nay, even of Montgomery (for such was the case), and omitting to do the same honour

expressed himself to a literary lady, as to lead her to exonerate him from the suspicion of being the author of it!

"*Vaticide*," says Walter Savage Landor, "is no crime in the statute book; but a crime, and a heavy crime it is: and the rescue of a poet from a murderous enemy, although there is no oaken crown decreed for it, is among the higher virtues." To the credit of English feeling and English criticism, the Edinburgh attempt to deal with an unoffending author, according to the fashion of *burking*, afterwards invented in that city, led at once to a generous sympathy with the sufferer, and a universal detestation of the reviewer's onslaught.

Miss Lucy Aikin addressed, through the "Athenæum," an elegant little poem "To Montgomery:"—

> "Droop not, sweet bard! the envious cloud
> Pale malice breathes, thy fame to shroud,
> Shall quickly pass away:
> No *meteor* lights thy sky adorn,
> 'Tis the true promise of the morn,
> And it must turn to day," &c.*

It may be doubted whether the whole history of modern literature affords any example of a severe critical dictum uttered at once with such unprovoked and heartless confidence, and so obviously, so entirely, and so permanently belied by the result. The period was, indeed, rapidly approaching, when the "Edinburgh Review" was destined to find its own merciless treatment of rising poets signally avenged by an illus-

to the great names I have mentioned!"—Burns's *Dinner*, Letter II. vol. i. p. 119.

* Athenæum, April 1807, p. 399.

trious victim. In this year appeared Lord Byron's unpretending volume, "Hours of Idleness," the Edinburgh critique on which presently led to the memorable recrimination of "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers."

That "troubles seldom come singly," is an adage the truth of which it was Montgomery's lot to verify at this trying period, as will be seen from the following letter, which is without date:—

*James Montgomery to Joseph Aston.*

"My dear Friend,

"My unpardonable inattention has neither arisen from diminished attachment to you, nor prouder ideas of myself, inspired by the vain breath of popular applause. That applause, I acknowledge, has been more grateful to me than was good for my humility; but it has not, in one instance, or in the smallest degree, weakened my affection for my friends by increasing my self-love. But had I as much leisure as I have desire and subject for a long letter, I should not, in my present state of mind, find power to write one. Two circumstances occurred to me on one day last week, each of which alone is sufficient to quench my spirit for a month, and one of them may perhaps extinguish both my name and my hope for ever. On Monday last, proposals were issued for publishing a new newspaper * in Sheffield, by a person who formerly was in my office nearly nine years; who knows the difficulties which I have had to encounter, and the weakness of my exertions to obtain and secure by diligence and perseverance the profits which may be derived from a well, or rather a cunningly, conducted newspaper. My very bread and water are now precarious, and, unless I wrestle hard to keep them, the staff and the cup of life will be snatched from me by one who founds his

* The Sheffield Mercury.

expectations of success, principally, I am convinced, on my unpopularity and imbecility. This is dreadfully humiliating: I have been drowning these twelve years, and just when I imagined I was getting my head above water, comes a hand and plunges me into the deep again! The other misery that I fell into on the same day, is perhaps yet more mortifying; I received the 'Edinburgh' review of my poems, of which I disdain now to to say more, than that, though I have perhaps been wounded as deeply by its envious and pitiful slanders as the critic intended, yet I declare truly that I would rather be the suffering object, than the triumphing author of such satire. You see I have had sufficient reason since the publication of my friend Rhodes's memoir [of me] to be abased, even if it had raised me to a giddy elevation of vanity. Of that memoir, I beg to be believed when I say that I am innocent of all the praise that he has lavished upon me. With the facts of the narrative I furnished my friend; but for the embellishments he went to the treasury of his own heart. I now publish my newspaper on Tuesday: this is Monday evening, and I need not describe to you the tumult and trouble of such an occasion. I have hardly drawn one peaceful breath to day; and three proofs are now waiting at my elbow. I cannot go to Manchester these—months!—I won't say how many. If I am neither getting fame nor money, I have all the plague without the profit of them; for literary and pecuniary engagements and demands are continually pressing and embarrassing me; and my mind is so ill at ease, that I should carry gloom into the families of my friends abroad, if I ventured at present to intrude into them. Farewell; with sincere love to you all, your friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. Joseph Aston, Deansgate, Manchester."

On the 16th of February Montgomery writes to Parken, with a criticism on Herbert's "Poems:" his letter contains the following lively passage:—

"While I recollect, I must mention a horrible suspicion

that I have concerning you. Dare you deny that you wrote the critique on Beattie, in the two last 'Eclectic Reviews?' Now, I can forgive you all the ill-natured things that you have said concerning the banker and the doctor, and everybody else; but there is a sly hint concerning the vanity and egotism displayed by authors in their private letters, which I have the vanity and the egotism too to take to myself; and though I can hardly recollect a line that I ever wrote to *you*, I do believe that my epistles have been well fumigated with self-incense or self-consequence in every form which could delight me and torment you. Are you guilty or not guilty of this wicked insinuation? Had you, or had you not, your invisible friend in your eye when you penned that provoking truth? I can feel your blushes warm the air even as far as Sheffield. You are therefore guilty. Now, mark how I will punish you. I will write ten times oftener, and at ten times greater length to you in future; my letters shall be filled with frost-work figures of speech and icicles of thought; my pages shall be winterly wildernesses of compliment, or sandy deserts of dissertation on moral and philosophical subjects, &c. &c. I will empty an inkstand on every sheet, but not one drop of warm heart's blood will I shed on a ream of paper; you shall never feel my pulse beat through your veins again.—Stop; I only mean that you deserve all this at my hands; but depend upon it, I will never take the trouble to punish myself so exquisitely to give you a locked jaw with yawning over my letters."

The above-mentioned letter contains not one word about what the writer was enduring from the "iron sleet" of the north; but in a note written twelve days afterwards, with a critical notice of Scott's "Ballads and Lyrical Pieces," he says, "I have only a moment left; if this is the dullest thing I ever sent you, place it to the account of the Edinburgh review of my poems." This article, which is written in a candid and generous

tone, appeared in the May number of the Review.* To the charge of having written the ill-natured critique on Beattie, Parken pleads "not guilty;" and at great length endeavours to convince his correspondent that if he does not allow his "heart" to be wounded by the critic's javelin, his reputation will suffer no injury from it.

*James Montgomery to Daniel Parken.*

"Sheffield, April 16. 1807.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I have indeed used you very ungratefully, which you may take, if you please, as a proof of my friendship, for I would not have dared to treat any indifferent person so ill. Hear, however, the truth. Southey's 'Selections,' &c., duly arrived, and no shower was ever more welcome in the panting noon of July than was your accompanying letter to my exhausted spirit. To you I am bound to confess my weakness, to apologise for my negligence. The 'Edinburgh Review' had, indeed, made me miserable beyond anything that the malice or the tyranny of man had been able to inflict on my sensibility, or, if you like it better, on my pride, before. All that I had suffered from political persecution and personal animosity in the former part of my life seemed manly and generous opposition in comparison with the cowardly yet audacious malignity of this critic, who took advantage of the eminence on which he was placed beyond the reach of retaliation, to curse me like Shimei; to cast stones and dirt at me, because he knew that I must from necessity be as passive as David: an injured and insulted author replying to the sarcasms of his unjust judge being as impotent as the trodden worm that turns to the foot that crushes it, but can do no more. It was evident that the assassin had determined to strike my reputation dead with a single blow; and I felt for many days after

* Eclectic Review, vol. iii. p. 374.

receiving it, as if he had succeeded. At first I was so astonished that I could hardly credit my eyes; and to this moment there is to me a mystery of iniquity in this strange publication, which I cannot comprehend, and concerning which I have sometimes been tempted to harbour uncharitable suspicions, from circumstances which I cannot explain to any heart but my own. However, be it as it may, and much as I have suffered from it both in health and mind, I would rather be the object than the author of such outrageous abuse. Your letter found me in the depth of despondency, in which that critique, and another, in reality, far more formidable event, which was made known to me on the same day, had plunged me. A rival newspaper was announced in Sheffield, and I foreboded little less than utter ruin to mine from my knowledge of the persons concerned in it. In that situation of mind, in the very week in which I was thus assailed, both in fame and fortune, by unmerciful and interested men, I wrote, from the binding pledge which I had given you, the remarks on Walter Scott's last poems. I scarcely recollect what I said of them, for I have never yet ventured to revise my rough copies, and during the three or four days in which I composed them, by stratagem, as it were,—stealing a moment or a minute at a time, as I could snatch them from the gloom of my mind, and the distraction of my thoughts. This I know well, that, racked and broken as I was myself on the wheel of the Scotch inquisitors, I showed all the mercy that my conscience would permit towards him. I did him all the justice that I could, though I could not help feeling some of the weakness and wickedness of envy towards him, as he had been the favourite, and I understand the associate of my butchers; none of that envy, however, I hope is betrayed in my review. I tried with all my might to hide the cloven foot; if I have shown it, chop it off, for I would rather limp on a wooden leg than be seen dancing with it. When your letter came, as I said before, I was very unhappy: it was like a rainbow to my hopes, which had sickened in the deferred expectation of hearing from you soon after the receipt

of my review of Scott's 'Ballads.' Since that time I have been slowly recovering my composure. The poison-tree of Edinburgh has not killed me this time with its pestilential influence, nor shall I be immediately reduced to beggary by my rival newsmonger. He has published three papers, and unless he improves, he will not drive me into the 'London Gazette' these ten years; but he is a prudent, steady, money-hunting man, and I fear that in due time he will oust me as a new tooth dislodges an old one. I am therefore compelled to devote more time and attention to my business than formerly was necessary, and this will so materially interfere with my literary amusements, that I shall need all your indulgence in point of time if you continue to employ my pen occasionally. I am sure that I can send you nothing in less than a month, when I will try to forward Southey; but I have not received the reprints. I should like 'Saul' and the 'Exodiad;' but I do not know when I can have an opportunity in showing my magnanimity in forbearing to abuse them without measure, because I have myself been so abused. My time is expired: I must send this letter to the post office immediately, as you expect it by return, and I should deserve to be despised by you for ever, if I neglected another moment to ask your kindest forgiveness for your unworthy friend,

"J. M.

"P.S. I have no time to read this over again."

# CHAP. XXXI.

## 1807.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH GARDINER OF LEICESTER. — LETTERS TO ASTON AND PARKEN.—SOTHEBY'S "SAUL."—TEXT AND NOTES.—LETTER TO IGNATIUS MONTGOMERY. — MRS. SKEPPER AND HER POETICAL FRIENDS. — MONTGOMERY TAKES PART IN LOCAL BENEVOLENT MOVEMENTS.— "CHIMNEY-SWEEPER'S BOY."—BOMBARDMENT OF COPENHAGEN. — METHODIST PREACHERS. — SPIRITUAL COUNSEL. — CONVERSATIONS. — EUPOLIS. — LETTER TO PARKEN.— "BOLEHILL TREES."— THE MOWER FAMILY. — "M. S." AND HER FRIENDS. — MRS. LE NOIR. — THE "MOLEHILL," THE "CAST-AWAY SHIP," AND POPE'S "WILLOW."

In the spring of this year Mr. Gardiner of Leicester, an enthusiastic lover of music, and the author of two or three interesting works on the subject*, wrote to Montgomery pressing him to turn his attention to the composition of hymns.

The following is the poet's reply. It includes a touching confession of his spiritual backsliding, and a no less affecting indication of his return to the fold and service of God: —

"Sheffield, March 31st, 1807.

"Sir.

"I was much obliged by the favour of your late letter, which I ought to have acknowledged much sooner; but causes, not worth naming, prevented me. When I was a boy, I

* "The Music of Nature," "Music and Friends," "Sacred Melodies," &c.

wrote a great many hymns; indeed, the first-fruits of my mind were all consecrated to *Him* who never despises the day of small things, even in the poorest of his creatures; but as I grew up, and my heart degenerated, I directed my talents, such as they were, to other services, and seldom, indeed, since my fourteenth year have they been employed in the delightful duties of the sanctuary. Many conspiring and adverse circumstances that have confounded, afflicted, and discouraged my mind have also compelled me to forbear from composing hymns of prayer and praise for many past years, because I found that I could not enter into the spirit of such divine themes, with that humble boldness, that earnest expectation, and ardent feeling of love to God and truth which were wont to inspire me, when I was an uncorrupted boy, full of tenderness, zeal, and simplicity. I have therefore, as you will perceive in reading my little volume, only occasionally touched a chord of the harp of saints and angels, and, though I have started and trembled at the sound which my own fingers had awakened, yet I am not ashamed to acknowledge that those divine 'incidentals' have always made my pulse quicken and my heart burn within me when they occurred. Nay, I know that in several of the smaller poems those sparks of fire from the altar have kindled the whole song into a bright and more beautiful flame, which many of the readers (as well as the writer) have perceived and confessed. Yet I have not dared to assume a sacred subject as the theme of any whole piece that I have written, on account of the gloom and despondency that frequently hung over my prospects and sometimes almost sunk my hopes into despair. At present, I am so deeply engaged with two small pieces on occasions sufficiently serious to occupy all the overflowing spirits that I can spare from the cares and vexations of a business that allows me very little leisure of time, and hardly any of mind, that, though I feel sincerely disposed to gratify myself by fulfilling, at least in a small degree, your flattering request, I cannot pledge myself to make an early attempt. I compose very slowly, and only by fits, when I can rouse my indolent powers into exertion; so that, unless some very auspicious

opportunity occurs, I can promise you nothing in less than two months. However, I will lie in wait for my heart, and, when I can string it to the pitch of David's lyre, I will set a psalm 'to the chief musician.' Will the stanza of four lines — 'Spirit leave thine house of clay,' &c., with the alternate or succeeding rhymes — do best? Pray send me stanzas of every kind in the measures which you want, and I will make one essay.

"I am, dear sir, your obedient servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY."

Three hymns of Montgomery's appeared in Gardiner's "Sacred Melodies," 1808; one of which* is noticed in the following letter of the worthy musical stockinger: —

*William Gardiner to James Montgomery,*

"Leicester, Jan. 30. 1808.

"DEAR SIR,

"I ought to have answered your kind letter last week, but the hope of sending you the African song† made me delay writing. It is true I have set it, but it is not altogether to my mind; simplicity is a '*sine qua non*' in little pieces of this kind, and in its present shape it wants reducing.

"I acknowledge that there is great beauty and tenderness of thought in the stanza you have favoured me with; but I confess, as a musician, it would have better suited my lyre if the lines had not been quite so long; eights in that verse are preferable to tens; for if in so long a line as tens, the verse does not naturally divide in the middle, the music cannot move in measured strains; for rest in music is as absolutely necessary at stated times as that the melody should flow.

"The little air now subjoined to your excellent hymn will prove better what I say. ["Father of eternal grace," &c.]

* Music and Friends, vol. i. p. 463.

† "The Negroes' Daughters" in the "West Indies."

"On referring to the notes, you will find a quaver rest at the end of each line; this rest we gain by having the poetry in sevens; for music of this measure is commonly put to verses of eight, so that the first syllable is disposed of by taking an auxiliary note at the beginning of the tune, and the first syllable of the second line fills up the resting place, which I describe to be so beautiful in its effect. I give you credit for being a musician, as you talk about the minor key, and I have no fear of being unintelligible to you.

"I cannot endure another interval of silence so long as the last. I can never forget you as a poet, but I may as a correspondent. I would have teased you into a reply sooner, but I dare not. However, I shall wait very contentedly another six months, providing you send me a hymn equal to this: its effect in music is charming; as the painters say, it '*comes out.*' The air I have quoted is from Mozart, and I have other beauties in store for you; but I must entreat your muse to keep to her favourite step. Sevens, sevens,—not one more for the world. If I can get my friend P. Pinder into a serious mood, he has promised to write me one or two, and you shall see them. The haste with which I write prevents me from saying more than that I am delighted with your letters, and that I hope to hear from you again, very, very soon.

"Dear Sir,

"I am most truly your obedient servant,

"W. GARDINER."

*James Montgomery to Joseph Aston.*

"Sheffield, May 22. 1807.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

". . . Have you read Bloomfield's 'Farmer's Boy?' If you have, I congratulate you on a pleasure past, which has left behind a sweet remembrance; if you have not, I congratulate you on a pleasure to come, which you will relish eagerly. It is a charming rural poem, replete with beautiful imagery, and arrayed in all the charms of simplicity. After Thomson, it was a hazardous, an almost hopeless, attempt to sing the seasons and their influence on man: I

imagined that after him the poor 'Farmer's Boy' might glean a few handfuls,—but he has reaped a harvest. When you have read this fascinating poem, I shall be impatient to hear that your sentiments concerning its extraordinary merits harmonise with mine. I was long and deeply prejudiced against the poem before I read it, from the circumstance of its having been puffed *by the publishers* worse than a quack medicine in the newspapers and magazines; but, in spite of all the disadvantages of being bepraised out of all character, it rose in every line in my opinion, and won on my admiration as the subject and the poet's genius unfolded together. Have I said too much on this theme? On looking back, I think not,—on looking forward, I think I have. When shall I have the happiness again to meet, converse, and walk with you? Doctor Favell*, the other day, gave me some hopes that you might be induced to come to Sheffield: there are more than two persons here who will be excessively glad to see you. . . . .

"Your faithful friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. Joseph Aston, Manchester."

*James Montgomery to Daniel Parken.*

"Sheffield, May, 28th, 1807.

"Indeed, my dear friend, I cannot answer your letters: they are as sweet to me as the honey of bees, and as sharp as the stings of wasps. . . . . But I *will* thank you for your consolations on the subject of my escape with barely my life in my hand from the tomahawks of the northern banditti. It is a strange thing that evil should be so much more effective than good in this miserable world. All the kindness of all my friends has been exerted to soothe me for the malice of one cowardly enemy who spat in my face in the

* The name of this gentleman often occurs in these letters: he was not a "Doctor," but a respectable surgeon, residing in Sheffield, and the mutual friend of the poet and his Manchester correspondent.

dark, and yet I feel the venom of his spittle still on my cheek, that burns at the recollection of the indignity. This is downright pride; if I had been a thousandth part as humble in heart as I pretend to be, I should scarcely have felt the insult,—at least, it would have been as little as the injury, which I trust has not been very great. . . . . Well, I promise 'Saul' by the 10th of June, Southey in the dog-days, and Wordsworth next harvest. This I may perform; and I will perform it, unless disappointed by unforeseen and inevitable crosses of fate. I have read 'Saul' once over, and have toiled through Cowley's 'Davideis' to contrast with it. Cowley is incomparably the greater poet: had he been born in any other age, he would have been the glory of England, and the envy of Italy. But I cannot proceed to write a line on 'Saul' till Saturday or Monday next. Ever since I received him, I have almost exclusively devoted my leisure moments to other work—the loose feathers that fall from the wings of Time, I pick up as I can, while I run after him, panting like a greyhound. . . . .

"Mr. Bowyer, of Pall Mall, proposing to publish a most superb tribute of the arts in honour of the abolition of the African slave trade, wrote to me requesting that I would compose a poem on the subject, which he would produce with the most splendid embellishments that the pencil or graver could bestow! There's honour for you! . . . Am I *indebted to you* for this application? answer me truly.

"I am your friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. D. Parken."

The closing paragraph of this letter affords the earliest allusion to a poetical design which was presently to occupy the writer's heart and soul. In a long letter to Parken, dated June 11., and mostly relating to the work in hand for the "Eclectic," he advises the editor of the transmission of a review of Sotheby's "Saul,"* a religious poem of considerable merit. Speaking of

* Eclectic Review, vol. iii. p. 594.

it to one of the biographers, Montgomery said, "There is an exceedingly fine passage extracted from it, which is nearly worth the whole of the poem besides; it represents the spirit that tormented Saul, as the changing apparition of what he himself had been at former periods of his life: that passage alone," added he, with considerable energy, "drew me forth, and determined me to the critique, and great pains I bestowed upon it."

The reviewer commences like an apostle, and describes the history of Saul, as "furnishing the finest materials for heroic song, with the peculiar advantage of being in general so well understood, as not to require the fashionable incumbrance of long notes, that so frequently aggravate the price and depreciate the value of modern poetry." He was generally hostile to *notes*, and few are the examples in his own works of such "fashionable incumbrances." "Not any thing," he observed, on one occasion, when a manuscript poem was given him to peruse, "can be more perplexing to the reader, or injurious to the character of the poet, than to be obliged to break off from, and probably in the middle of, one of the finest passages, when we have caught the very spirit of the author, in order to read a long note either illustrative of its meaning, or in reference to some incidental allusion. We often lose much of our sense of the beauty of a poem by the perplexity which a divided attention between text and notes occasions." We could not avoid contrasting this remark with an observation once made by Dr. Adam Clarke, who said, when the poetical compositions of Sir Walter Scott were the subject of conversation, "I seldom read all the poetry; the notes to me are the most valuable part of his works." This dissimilarity in the tastes of two eminent men is easily accounted for; one was a *poet*, the other a *commentator*.

*James Montgomery to the Rev. Ignatius Montgomery.*

"Sheffield, June 20. 1807.

"My dear Brother,

"When St. John was in the spirit on the Lord's day he saw visions of future glory: I am in the spirit also on the Lord's day, and I behold scenes of past happiness, returning like lovely dreams upon me. I am transported to my native country; I am turned back to infancy, and in the morning of life the Sun of Righteousness is rising upon me with healing in his wings; alas! how long is it since I saw that sun except in memory's melancholy eye! That eye often looks behind to dwell for a moment with exquisite misery and delight, most ineffably mingled, on the few hours of pure joy and peace that I have known since I began to breathe this air of mortality, that quickly kills every flower of bliss which springs in the wilderness of a human heart that was once a paradise, but is now overrun with thorns and brambles, and chilled and darkened with forests of cypress and yew!

"You are now in the land of my birth, and near the spot where I first saw the light: of how little importance is it to all the world besides, that I was ever born at all! Yet to me, how awful is the existence into which I was called without my own consent, and from which I cannot retire, though I were to give myself up to suffering for millions of ages to purchase the privilege of annihilation! Here, then, I am; and what I am finally here, I must for ever be. Is it, indeed, in my own power to choose between eternal bliss, and everlasting burnings? If it be, it is truly time for me to awake and look around me, with an earnestness that will make every other concern of life indifferent to me, to see how I shall escape the latter and secure the former,—for to the one or to the other I am inevitably predestined. I have the choice of these two; but I have no other choice.

"Brother! how is it possible that I should hesitate an instant? Why have I not, since I began to write this letter, already by an act of that faith which is the power of God communicated to his creatures, and to which all things are

possible,—why have I not already decided my condition for eternity? Is there anything more mysterious in the whole mystery of iniquity, than that a man shall be deeply, dreadfully, convinced of sin, and believe, almost without daring to make a reserve, in all the threatenings and judgments of God,—yet have no confidence in his promises and declarations of mercy? And this is my case, as nearly as I can express it. Yet I do not, and I dare not utterly despair when I look at God; but I do and must despair when I look at myself; and my everlasting state depends upon the issue of the controversy between him and me: if he conquers, I shall be saved—if I prevail against him, I perish.

"I owe you my warmest thanks for two very affectionate letters, the one from Grace Hill, and the other from Ayr. I am exceedingly glad that you have had the opportunity of changing, for a time, both your place of abode and your daily occupations. I know—though you never gave me so much of your confidence as to tell me so—that you have more employment at Grace Hill than your powers can support, without frequent and injurious exhaustion both of mind and body: it is true that you are in the service of the congregation, and He who is the Elder of it has a right to all the services that you can render him, and it is your duty—your privilege, I mean—to spend and to be spent for him. Yet I think your brethren ought to lay no heavier burthen upon you, than your strength, well put forth, can bear without sinking under the weight; for I am sure you will serve them and their Master much better by serving them to the eleventh hour, than by labouring yourself to death before the end of the fifth; for though you may, by a *mortal* exertion, do more work in a given time, you will do less on the whole; and the Lord's vineyard is so great, and his husbandmen so few and so feeble, that their lives ought to be precious in their own sight, in proportion to the magnitude and fertility of the field before them. Good men should not be too impatient for their reward; the longer and harder their labour, the sweeter their rest will be; and saints, I apprehend, are more useful on earth than they are in heaven, according to our

received notions of the present being a state of activity, and the future a season of repose. In the first, we have not only our own souls to save, but, to the utmost of our ability, to be the instruments in the hands of the Lord of saving the souls of others: whereas in Paradise, though we believe that our salvation will be secure beyond the possibility of failure, yet we know not that we can be of the smallest service to our 'five brethren,' whom we have left behind us, and whom we may see hereafter, afar off, in that place where the 'rich man' was, while we are in 'Abraham's bosom.' But I am rambling into a strange mysterious round, in which all human thought must be for ever bewildered, till the grave has revealed to each of us the secrets which we can never discover before the appointed time, and which we can never afterwards betray, even if we thought we could save the world by the divulgement. I hope, with the blessing of that God who carried you in the hollow of his hand through the storm that assailed you on your voyage to Scotland, that you will be benefited by the change of air and sea bathing. I wish I could meet you on the coast of my dear native country; but that is absolutely forbidden at present. My temporal concerns are too much in arrear and too complicated to permit me to leave them.

"During the last two months I have been almost incessantly involved in the tumult and vortex of an electioneering contest, of which you will see sufficient in the newspapers. It is true that I took no personal share in the warfare, except in the way of my profession; and, being occasionally employed by all parties, my office has seldom been cool with forging thunderbolts for the combatants to hurl at each other. It is over, and the man to whom I wished success has triumphed, though I do not know that his election will be of a pin more advantage to me than his defeat would have been; but we are 'careful for many things' in this world, though there is only 'one thing needful.' Henry Steinhaur arrived last night in Sheffield with a convoy of sixteen children from this neighbourhood, who are all Fulneck scholars. Some good has accrued from my re-

siding in Sheffield. Who knows what eternal consequences may result from so many boys and girls hearing the simple gospel of Christ crucified preached faithfully to them among the Brethren! It warms my cold, and melts my hard heart sometimes when I think that I may thus accidentally have been the cause of promoting the everlasting welfare of some of my fellow creatures in this neighbourhood, where I came an outcast, and in which I have lived a stranger. The new newspaper which I so much dreaded has hurt me very little as yet; and I am certainly much less frightened at it since it appeared than I was before it came out, when I expected Goliath, but have hitherto only seen his armour-bearer.

"Yours, &c.,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Rev. Ignatius Montgomery, Ayr, Scotland."

In a letter of the 25th of July, he writes to inform Parken that he may shortly expect reviews of Southey's "Specimens of British Poets," and of Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads." The former of these he transmits in a few days, with a note containing a request that the editor would oblige him "by noticing the 'Chimney Sweeper's Boy,' in a few lines, making no quotation, but only giving the tale such a character as you think it deserves. It is not my production," he adds, "nor have I any interest in the sale; but I assure you it has affected me to tears more than once in reading it,—and it was only written to do good, and does not pretend to be poetry." The author of the tale here mentioned was Mr. Samuel Roberts, and this is one of the earliest indications of Montgomery's sympathy with him in a benevolent aim,—finally successful,—the abolition of the employment of little boys in sweeping chimneys.

*James Montgomery to Joseph Aston.*

"Sheffield, July 29. 1807.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

". . . . During the last twelve months, I have been

almost wearied out with letter-writing. The temporary lustre of my popularity attracted a number of strangers, of different characters, tastes, and accomplishments, to address me under various pretences, and with some I have been led into frequent and interesting correspondence. To all I have endeavoured to be grateful, as I was convinced that something beyond idle curiosity had tempted them to break the bonds of invisibility, and appear in their own characters to one whom they had only seen by the light of song, and whom they were anxious to know as a man as well as a poet. This was, I acknowledge, so flattering to my vanity, and to some better feelings also, that I yielded to the delightful temptation, and became ensnared within a magic circle of friends whom I had never seen, and who themselves only knew of my existence by my own romantic representations of my mind and heart in my poems and letters; but I have been compelled from absolute inability of supporting the burthen, however pleasing, to break through several links of this secret chain, and reduce my regular correspondents to as small a number as possible. I assure you, on the faith of all our former, and in the hope of our future, and, let me say, our *eternal* friendship, that I have included you in the small and select list. . . . . I will answer your questions in the order you have asked them. I know nothing of the success or failure of the third edition of my poems; my booksellers have never informed me how they sold; and I have never asked them. They printed 2000 copies, and if they dispose of them in 2000 years, I must wait patiently for the issue, and be thankful for my share of the profits—and for all the fame of them—at the end of that period. I cannot hope for them to be sold off in two years; and you know the Edinburgh Reviewers have prescribed three years as the limit of my immortality! You ask how my literary hours are now employed? I answer—very indolently and unprofitably: at the rate I have written since my last volume appeared, it will be at least three years before I can produce another: indeed, I am in no haste to do that. I care not how often I appear before the public in an old shape; and I

scarcely mind how seldom in a new one. I would rather be the author of one poem of established and enduring reputation, than of all the fugitive pieces of the day, that are like sparks among ashes—they *glitter* only as they *go out.* I have written the 'Molehill,' which you have seen, and about half-a-dozen small pieces, which you have not seen, in the last fifteen months. I enclose a copy of the only one of the latter which has appeared in print, but you probably may have met with it, as it has been often copied, though anonymously published. This was very gratifying to me, because it proved that my verse can still command attention, even when it is not known to be mine. I allude to the 'Harp of Sorrow.' I also send you, as a proof of my perfect confidence in your fidelity and discretion, the cancelled poem of the 'Loss of the Locks.' You understand the conditions. You may show it to whomsoever you please, *at your own house, but it must not pass the threshold; neither the whole, nor any part of it, must, on any account, be copied by any person.* It is not necessary to explain my reasons for such rigid injunctions; and some may think—though you will not, because you know better how to estimate my motives—that I am making the poem itself of more consequence than it is. To such I would say, I care not of how little consequence it is to them; but it is of great consequence to me, that my reputation be not injured by its appearing, with more faults than it even now has, before the public. I know you will be faithful to my feelings and my fame, and therefore I commit this trifle to your care. Mr. Bowyer has engaged me to furnish him with a poem on the Slave Trade, for his new and magnificent national work. Campbell and Graham are to be my associates, and are each to furnish a poem on the same theme. The subject has been ploughed, and cropped, and reaped these twenty years, and it should lie fallow for twenty more, to get a good harvest from the soil. But there are *some* gleanings left. Of the new Sheffield newspaper, I have not much reason to complain. I was dreadfully alarmed at its annunciation; but its appearance has hitherto been far less formidable than my fears had

anticipated it would be: my sale is not at all diminished; and advertisements are as plentiful—or, rather, as few as ever. I hate opposition; and am ill qualified to sanction it in business. It is well that I am but one, and little money will keep me from the workhouse. I verily believe if I were as many folks as you are, the parish would either have to take possession, or transport us. As for my spirits, I won't plague you with them this time; they are 'black spirits and white, blue spirits and gray,' as usual. . . . . Concerning plays, I will tell you a story. About eight years ago I was deeply stage-smitten, not with acting, but with plays themselves. I wrote a comedy, and thought it the wittiest and most delightful drama that was ever composed. I sent it to London; contrived to get it introduced to Mr. Harris, though without any recommendation but my own, and I anxiously expected his decision concerning it, which, if favourable, I was sure would be at once fame and fortune to me. About three months afterwards, I received my manuscript back, without any answer or acknowledgment whatever: I doubt whether it had ever been read over! Since that time, my mind has changed so much (not in consequence of that failure, which only enraged and mortified me, but did not cure me of my passion for the drama), that *I never read any comedies*, and seldom ever peep into tragedies. Shakspeare I have not forsaken entirely, because he is a poet of such transcendant genius; but, except Miss Baillie, I read no other dramatist; therefore I am not a proper person to advise you on the subject you have mentioned.

"Your friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. Joseph Aston, Manchester."

His lively and intelligent correspondent, Mrs. Skepper, who was residing at Merton, in Surrey, writes to ask "what has become of Montgomery?" whose last letter, she tells him, "was so gloomy that it might have been written in the cave of Trophonius;" adding, "I think I

told you that Wordsworth and his family spent a month with me, and that Coleridge was with us every day. They both thought highly of your poetry. Mr. Coleridge begged that I would present his acknowledgments to you for the pleasure he had derived from your works. I assure you if you knew how very lightly he holds the very best of the modern poets, you would think his praise a very high compliment." She then, in a few lines, admirably hits off the character of her two friends: "Mr. Wordsworth is one of the most amiable men I ever knew; he has great powers in conversation: he has thought while other men have talked; and now, when he chooses to talk, I assure you he makes other men think. He has mild and modest, yet very firm manners—a perfect consciousness of his own talents without any arrogance or affectation. Coleridge talks eloquently and incessantly, with the air of a man who has been in the habit of haranguing."

Amidst his numerous literary engagements, with a love of solitude singularly unusual to one in his position, and a most sensitive shrinking from contact with his fellow men, Montgomery began at this time to take an active part—or, perhaps, it would be more accurate to say, allowed himself to be brought into intimate official connection with several of those associations for the promotion of local or general benevolence with which his name was ever afterwards identified. Among these may be named the "Society for bettering the Condition of the Poor," by means of a system of district visiting from house to house; and the society, which was formed this year, to improve the condition of children employed by chimney sweepers, and to supersede the necessity of employing them — objects which the promoters lived to see accomplished. Attendance at the meetings of these and similar societies led to a lifelong friendship between

the poet and two gentlemen, whose names will often occur in these pages — Samuel Roberts and George Bennet, Esquires.

*James Montgomery to Samuel Roberts, Esq.*

"DEAR SIR,

"I return your simple and truly affecting tale.* It speaks the language of nature, and therefore will be read, and understood, and felt by all; and even by those whom the most sublime and splendid poetry could not touch. I am confident that it is calculated to make a very lively impression; and it will be the fault of those hearts on which that impression is made if it be not a lasting one also.

"Your friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY."

It need hardly be said that the editor of the "Iris" regarded the bombardment of Copenhagen, which took place in the month of September this year, with even stronger emotions of regret than he had experienced, in common with so many other of his countrymen, on the destruction of the Danish fleet in 1801. Six years afterwards, when adverting to the havoc produced among the British ships of the line, by a tremendous storm in the North Seas, and the probable exultation of the Danes in witnessing what they might well deem a retributive calamity on the former spoliators of their shipping and city, the editor said, "That such cause for joy in the misfortunes of our countrymen should ever have been afforded to a people who, even in the lying cant of politics, were never called our '*natural enemies*,' is more to be deplored than any single act of any ministry since the war began — for we can never consider the burning of Copenhagen as an act of the

* "Chimney Sweeper's Boy, a tale in rhyme: sixth edition, published in 'Chimney Sweeper's Friend,' 1824."

British nation." The closing sentiment has latterly been applied by a learned Danish author, almost in the same words, to the memorable affair of 1801. But whatever difference of opinion may exist in this country relative to the policy which dictated the battle in Copenhagen Roads, and however we may concede to Danish writers some ground for the assertion that the English nation "deplored the attitude of hostility" assumed by the government on that occasion*, it will for ever remain "an unshaken article of faith among the British people that Nelson then gained a brilliant victory."

"Gather up the fragments" — here is one, which, although without either title or date, belongs to this period, and *is*, at least, a fragment which indicates the motion of a "broken and contrite heart."

"I stir the ashes of my mind,
And here and there a sparkle find
That leaps into a moment's light,
Then dwindles down again in night.
Yet burns a fire within my breast,
Which cannot quench and will not rest;
O, for a sudden, secret rent,
In this hard heart to give it vent!
O, for a gale of heavenly breath,
To quicken life again from death!"

MS.

It ought to be mentioned that, at the time when Montgomery began to attend the Methodist chapel, the Wesleyan pulpits in Sheffield were filled, *inter alios*, by three or four preachers of remarkable character. The Rev. William Bramwell was a man of singular energy, of untiring zeal, and of one work: prayer, indeed, appeared to be his vital breath; and his word as a preacher

* Worsaae's "Danes and Norwegians," 185, 186.

came with such power, that, as Montgomery said, he would often grasp and wring the very soul of his hearers; and his success in his vocation was as signal as his faith was energetic.

An entire contrast to Mr. Bramwell in every thing except devotion to the service of their common Master, was the Rev. William Edward Miller. He was the son of Dr. Miller, the organist and historian of Doncaster, whose musical taste he inherited, displaying a power of execution on the violin that sometimes drew enthusiastic praise from his admirers. He came to Sheffield, where he resided some time as a teacher of music, till, attracted by the noise of certain "revivals," or prayer-meetings, in Norfolk Street Chapel, he one night ventured in — was arrested — convinced — converted — and became a Methodist preacher! In his new character he displayed at least all his wonted fervour and earnestness. The hymn tunes and holy songs of his Christian profession were as the "wings of a dove" to his often enraptured spirit. He was, perhaps, one of the most seraphic declaimers in the body to which he belonged; and enforced more frequently, if not more successfully, than any of his brethren, the litigated doctrine of "Christian perfection;" his entire life and conversation being in beautiful accordance with his pulpit ministrations.

Differing from both his colleagues in almost all points except in their devotional zeal, was the Rev. William Miles, the author of a "Chronological History of the Methodists," a work, the title of which is alone sufficient to indicate a mind of a calmer order. As an Irishman, he had some of the impulsive energy of his countrymen; and as a preacher, he was equally admired and beloved by the more intelligent members of his congregation; while to Montgomery he presented

the accidental charm of having known and conversed with Ireland's sweetest poetess—Mrs. Tighe.* And while his conscience was stirred, his spirit warmed, and his mind expanded by these ministers, his taste was gratified by the chaste and fervid eloquence of the Rev. Robert Newton, the Apollos of modern Methodism. Other preachers might be named; but we mention these four as having had at this period a more immediate influence on the susceptible religious character of the Sheffield poet at a critical moment of his spiritual history. It was not, however, we believe, until a somewhat later period, that he had much personal intercourse with, or freely "opened his mind" in spiritual conversation to any of the men whose pulpit ministrations he attended.

One of these, the Rev. Walter Griffith, — of whom we have often heard Montgomery speak kindly, — when leaving the town, in the autumn of this year, commended him to the Christian care of his successor, a well known and excellent preacher, who afterwards exercised an influence in the affairs of Methodism, unparalleled since the days of Wesley. Mr. Griffith said, in the letter presented to the poet by the Rev. Jabez Bunting —

"My principal reason for introducing him to you is the hope I have that he will, by the blessing of our gracious Lord, be rendered useful to you. I have often thought of, and often felt a wish to hear of your having risen above your discouragements into the enjoyments of true religion. Should this be the case, my brother Bunting will, I doubt not, help you forward; or should you still be cast down, his tender, affectionate mind will sympathise with you in your sorrows."—*August* 22.

* Author of "Psyche."

Of the state of his religious feelings at this period, we have direct evidence in the letter to Mr. and Mrs. Ignatius Montgomery, already given; and while there is reason to believe that he was still harassed with "doubts and fears" relative to his acceptance with God, as a prodigal returning to his heavenly Father, it is gratifying to find that his Moravian friends, from whom he was locally separated by circumstances, were not less solicitous for his spiritual welfare, than those zealous preachers and their pious townsmen, with whom he now frequently, if not statedly, joined in religious worship. The Rev. C. A. Pohlman, one of the Brethren's ministers, then residing at Mirfield, in a letter to the poet, dated Sept. 14., says:—

"O how shall I rejoice to hear that the horizon of your soul is serene and unclouded; that doubts and scruples have ceased to agitate your seeking mind; and that you have fully found again that *unseen* but *ever-present* Friend, whose hand has been on you for good thus far; who was the comfort of your earliest day; the dawning of whose love you once felt—which love alone can smooth the path of life, cheer our gloomy hours, and make the approach of death not to be dreaded! Pardon the liberty I take; my anxious concern for your happiness must plead my excuse, and my own experience makes me thus speak. . . . Convinced I was a sinner, and stood in need of a Saviour, I flew to Jesus—*simply* and *child-like:* need I tell you the consequence? O my friend! do likewise; be *a child* again, in seeking safety in the arms of your Saviour, and there you will find *rest* for your weary soul."

The review of Southey's "Specimens" was published in the "Eclectic" for October.* It is a mas-

* Eclectic Review, vol. iii. p. 845.

terly and discriminating article, and will repay an attentive perusal. The following extract will show how anxiously Montgomery laboured in all that he wrote, even in reviews, not only to defend Christianity in general, but to set forth the advantages of its personal enjoyment and operative influence.

"Mr. Southey's sneers," says he, "in the following passage, are unworthy of him:—

"'The school of Sternhold and Hopkins was established—a school in which the succession of masters has been uninterrupted; the *fanatics* of our own days being as much edified as the psalm-singers of King Edward's, with godly songs, and the sorrowful sobs of simple sinners. Poetry gained nothing by these efforts, but happily it lost nothing. In Scotland, where fanaticism eventually triumphed, the fine arts were extirpated; John Knox was the Herbert of the Reformation.'

"It is easy to comprehend whom the writer means by 'the *fanatics* of our days;' but if Mr. Southey will have the candour to examine the hymn-books of the Dissenters and Methodists, he will find that Watts, Doddridge, the two Wesleys, Newton, and Cowper, were not of the school of Sternhold and Hopkins; and as he seems wretchedly ignorant on this part of his subject, it may be useful to inform him, that the doggerel lays of Sternhold and Hopkins, and the more insipid strains of *Nahum* Tate and *Nicholas* Brady (with whose *Christian* names he makes himself merry, in another place, as if they were responsible for what their godfathers and godmothers did for them), never descend so low as the conventicle, but are sung in churches and cathedrals, before bishops and prebendaries, lords and ladies, and all the fashionable world of the *establishment*, who certainly do not deserve the opprobrious appellation of *fanatics*. But if religion has not been much honoured by poets, it is to their disgrace, and ought not to be mentioned to her disparagement. Is the poetry of Milton, Young, and Cowper degraded or exalted by their piety?"

However the reviewer might have to censure the "sneers" and "sarcasms" of Mr. Southey at this period, he lived long enough to believe that a change for the better had taken place in the Christian views of the worthy laureate, as will appear from the following remarks: — *Montgomery:* "I had a correspondence with Mr. Southey on *religious* subjects. He regretted that he had been sceptically inclined when young, but was happy to state that a considerable change had taken place in his views and feelings; and though he could not class himself with any particular denomination of Christian believers, yet he could conscientiously style himself a *seeker.* In my answer to this, I adopted the apostolical method, and assured him that they that *seek* shall *find.* He further expressed the pleasure which he frequently experienced in bending before the family altar with his wife and children, and pouring out his soul in prayer to the Father of spirits." *Everett:* "It was very different with him when he wrote —

> "'Go thou and seek the house of prayer!
> I to the woodlands bend my way,
> And meet RELIGION there.'*

Indeed, the public must perceive in his writings a marked contrast between his *former* and his *latter* self. His 'Roderick, the Last of the Goths' exhibits some fine penitential expressions, as well as pure and elevated evangelical strains — making allowance for the popish faith of Roderick; and few men, if any, could have entered so luminously, deeply, and feelingly into the subject, who had not previously experienced something of the kind, and whose minds had not been imbued with religious truth."

* Southey's Poems, vol. i. p. 130., 1797.

Montgomery, in this review, expresses his astonishment that Mr. Southey has not printed any "Specimens" of the poetry of Dr. Doddridge, Dr. Watts, or the two Wesleys, and briefly gives his own opinion of the character of Charles Wesley as a poet. The following are minutes of a conversation: — *Montgomery:* "Charles Wesley was very unequal; for while he strikingly excelled in some, he was slovenly in other of his compositions. He published too many hymns; he would have been more successful if he had been more sparing." Taking down a volume — "There," continued he, pointing to the pages, "are two hymns in his very first style. Where the compilers have met with them, I know not, for I never saw them in any of Mr. Wesley's 'Collections;' and yet I have no doubt of their genuineness; indeed, if Charles Wesley's name had not been affixed to them, I could have vouched for them as his." He then read them, and coming to the second stanza, said, "Here is a happy illustration, —

"'My comforts all are blasted,
My comforter is gone:
The joy which once I tasted,
O that I ne'er had known!
The gourd which soothed my anguish,
Is withered o'er my head,
And faint with grief I languish,
To sink among the dead.'"

After reading the intervening lines, he proceeded with, —

"No heart-distracting passion
Is there to break my peace;
But joy without cessation,
And love without excess."

"The last thought," said he, "is extremely beau-

tiful; and these two hymns exceed everything he ever wrote for pathos and simplicity; he winds up the passions to the highest pitch, and then, at the close, the whole goes off in a rapture." New charms were added to the hymns by the plaintively impressive tone of his voice: and, to say nothing of their poetic qualities, they were expressive apparently of Montgomery's own state of mind at the time; for he seemed to dwell upon them, and to cherish the feelings they are calculated to inspire.

He mentioned at the same time the two volumes of "Short Poems, on Select Scripture Passages," published by Charles Wesley, and the three volumes of "Miscellaneous Poems" published by his brother John: to both these works he refers in his review of Southey's "Specimens." *Rev. Thomas Smith:* "Was not Charles Wesley the translator of 'Eupolis; his Hymn to the Creator?'" *Everett:* "No, sir; it was translated from the Greek by his father, Samuel Wesley." *Montgomery:* "And in that translation he has given us one of his finest pieces." *Smith:* "Is it not a remarkable circumstance that the original has never been found? that no one can give any account of it?" *Montgomery:* "It certainly is unaccountable. That there has been a Greek hymn from which it has been taken, can hardly be a question; but it was doubtless the forgery of some later age." *Everett:* "The hymn itself furnishes evidence sufficient that Mr. Wesley was imposed upon. It is too *Christian* for *Heathenism:* at least, there is too much of the correct thinking of *Judaism,* relative to the Supreme Being, for a pagan." *Montgomery:* "Seneca, Plato, and other heathen moralists and philosophers, have proceeded far, but Eupolis certainly exceeds them all." Calling upon Mr. Montgomery two or three days after, he produced the volume of

Mr. Wesley's "Moral and Sacred Poems," in which the hymn of Eupolis stands first*; and on turning over a number of pages, he asked, pointing to a piece entitled the "Mystery of Life," "Do you know anything of that?" *Everett:* "I do not recollect it at present. Whose composition is it?" *Montgomery:* "Mr. Gambold's, a Moravian bishop." *Everett:* "I know him well as a writer, and as the author of 'Ignatius;' but I am not acquainted with that piece. What are its peculiar characteristics?" *Montgomery:* "It is remarkable for depth of thought, in quantity and quality. Every thing connected with man — whence came I? — what am I? — whither am I going? and such like momentous questions, are forcibly and finely evoked and answered. It leads you to ask, independent of these hands, feet, and eyes, and of the whole body, what is there *within?* I have met with few pieces in which there is so much naked thought."

* He has been considered the author of the poem: but having read it with attention, and also the remarks of Dr. Clarke upon it in his "Wesley Family," I cannot admit that even he has quite settled the questions of originality and authorship. I think the versification is wholly unlike that of any known composition by the venerable rector of Epworth: and almost as little does the Platonic sentimentality of the poem resemble anything which bears the name of his daughter, Mrs. Wright; though, if it had really a Wesleyan origin, this highly accomplished lady is more likely to have conceived and executed such a work than her father. As to its merits, every person who reads it will be disposed to agree with Dr. Clarke, that "it may be considered as a fine, and in general very successful, attempt to imitate a Greek poet;" at the same time, it is probable but few will, with the learned Biblical annotator, "believe it to be, without exception, the finest poem in the English language."—J. H.

# CHAP. XXXII.

## 1807—1808.

LETTER TO PARKEN. — "BOLEHILL TREES." — THE MOWER FAMILY. — "M. S." AND HER FRIENDS. — MRS. LE NOIR. — THE "MOLEHILL," THE "CAST-AWAY SHIP," AND "POPE'S WILLOW." — R. H. CROMEK. — NAMESAKE CHILDREN. — SPURIOUS POEMS. — "PILGRIMAGE TO CANTERBURY." — ANIMADVERSIONS ON COBBETT'S ADVOCACY OF WAR. — HEROIC SELF-DEVOTION. — REVIEW OF WORDSWORTH'S "LYRICAL BALLADS." — CONVERSATION. — FOSTER, THE ESSAYIST. — LETTERS TO PARKEN AND ASTON. — NIGHTINGALE'S "PORTRAITURE OF METHODISM." — WALTER SCOTT, KIRKE WHITE, AND THOMAS DERMODY. — CONTRITE EXPRESSIONS. — "MARMION." — LOPE DE VEGA. — THE "SENSES." — THE "WALK IN SPRING." — "SWISS COWHERD'S SONG." — CONVENTION OF CINTRA. — ADDRESS TO THE KING.

### *James Montgomery to Daniel Parken.*

"Sheffield, Nov. 9. 1807.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"I take the earliest opportunity of sending you my friend's remarks on Joinville, which you will read with all the candour, and adjudge with all the fairness, that the author could desire.

"I inclose also two unpublished poems of mine. Of the first, 'Bolehill Trees,' I will say nothing: of the second, (MS.), I have no hesitation to inform you that it has been very minutely criticised by some of my most zealous friends, and certain parts of it severely blamed. I ask no mercy of you; I know that there are faults enough in it to please even the Edinburgh Reviewers, and beauties to provoke their utmost spleen. You are at liberty to read these effu-

sions to whom you please among your *friends;* but they are not for *mere acquaintance.* I only enjoin you not to permit any one to copy either piece, and it would oblige me the more if you would not lend them out of your sight. These, with the 'Molehill,' which you have seen, and three or four smaller unpublished pieces, are all my poetical productions since my volume was published; thanks to your unremitting flail that threshes my brains to chaff with criticism! I have besides these worked out between three and four hundred lines on the Slave Trade; but I hardly dare mention these; they never can pay me in fame or profit the pains they have cost me, and the precious hours they have wasted, — and yet I sometimes think it will be my best poem: till it is finished, however, I alternately exult and shudder over it. It has already afforded me more delight and inflicted more torture on my hopes and fears than any piece I ever composed. I ought to have told you before that 'Zembo and Nila' was a juvenile essay*, vamped up again, with more trouble than the poem was worth: I thought, however, that it was not an every-day story told in common-place language. You see how loosely and widely I have written; and, though it is Monday night, I could have found time to have written close and full; but alas! my heart is in the dust, and my head lies upon it like a gravestone. I am very, very low, and God only can raise me up. May his Almighty arm be your everlasting upholder!

"Farewell, your friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY."

In the preceding letter Montgomery mentions besides the "Molehill," two poems, which, justly as they have been admired for their intrinsic merits, are still more interesting as the memorials of personal friendship.

The graceful stanzas entitled "Bolehill Trees"† were,

* Originally printed in the "Whisperer."

† Works, p. 284.

as appeared from the original head-note, identified with a spot "where the writer had spent many happy hours." Soon after the appearance of the Rev. Robert Hall's celebrated sermon on "Modern Infidelity," in 1800, Montgomery was employed by Robert Mower, Esq., of Barlow Woodseats, to print an abstract of that discourse for circulation among his rustic neighbours; and afterwards, in 1805, a pamphlet of "Inferences drawn from Ancient History, applicable to the Present Times." These transactions laid the foundation of a lasting friendship; and the poet became a frequent visitor at the residence of the worthy, but somewhat eccentric, "Squire Mower,"* at his very secluded residence, in a deep and beautifully wooded valley, about midway between Sheffield and Chesterfield.† With Mrs. Mower, her two sons, and two daughters, Montgomery was an especial favourite; and no wonder, seeing that he brought along with his acknowledged literary taste, a perfect frankness and trustworthiness of character, which at once inspired and returned confidence. Hence he was consulted as a wise and willing adviser under all circumstances. One of the sons evinced a talent for literature, in connection with which he often

* It was his custom to invite a number of his poorer neighbours to dine with him on Christmas day; and on one of these occasions —if not oftener—each guest found a piece of gold under his plate!

† As Woodseats was nearly ten miles from Sheffield, the poet commonly went there on horseback: on one of these occasions he had ridden down the somewhat steep road through Piperwood, with a degree of slowness and caution that could hardly have been greater "had he been made of glass," and was returning the same way with similar wariness, when he was not a little abashed for his own horsemanship, to meet a young fellow trotting down the stony descent with his back foremost, and his head towards the tail of his steed!

sought the assistance and enjoyed the counsels of the family friend. The elder daughter was a frank, intelligent, and accomplished maiden, who showed her heart in her countenance; for her, Montgomery wrote the verses "To Agnes,"* and the lines from "A Daughter to a Mother, on her Birthday."† "Many persons," said a relative of hers to us since the poet's death, "thought he would have married Charlotte Mower, they always appeared so fond of each other;" and this notion was certainly not confined to mere vulgar gossips: on the other hand, we are bound to say that it does not receive the slightest countenance from what we have seen of their correspondence. Mr. Mower died in 1811; and his worthy relict in 1822, when Woodseats passed to another branch of the family, and Montgomery's connection with the locality, though not with the remnant of those who had endeared it to him, altogether ceased.‡

* Works, p. 283. Charlotte (*poeticè* Agnes) was married to Samuel Thorold, Esq., of Wellam, co. Notts. She died 1837, aged 57.

† Works, p. 292.

‡ The Mowers had long been settled at Barlow. In the burying ground, and immediately opposite the porch of the ancient chapel, there is a railed enclosure, within which stand six or eight moss-grown table tombs, bearing the family name, and dating at least two hundred years back: while inside the sacred edifice, their benefactions are recorded on the tablets,—and even the sacramental plate itself testifies of their memory and munificence. Perhaps, however, the greenest—certainly the most conspicuous and valuable—memorial of their worth is the free school and master's house at Bolehill. About 1750, the master of this school was Mr. Goodwin, father of the first, and grandfather of the late Reverend Edward Goodwin, both of Sheffield: that worthy man planted about the school-ground the sycamores, which for nearly a century have formed so conspicuous a landmark for many miles around; and which, having once narrowly escaped being cut down

BARLOW WOODSEATS, WITH BOLEHILL TREES IN THE DISTANCE.

Between the hearty congratulations of Montgomery's literary friends on the success of his poems on the one hand, and the insolent attack of the northern critic on the other, the still small voice of "A Female whom Sickness had reconciled to the Notes of Sorrow," more than once reached him in his seclusion. How he was affected by these communications may be seen from the lines dedicated to the memory of the writer, who died soon afterwards, when her name and merits were disclosed to him by some of her surviving friends. These

by some barbarous official, are destined to flourish perennially in one of the most pleasing little poems which ever came from Montgomery's pen.

lines in their published form bear at the head of the title "M. S."*, usually taken to indicate simply "Memoriæ Sacra," a common formula of mortuary inscriptions; but they are also the initials of Mary Steevens, an amiable young Quaker lady. The letters which had been addressed to her falling into the hands of the late Hugh Chudleigh Standert, who had just commenced the practice of his profession as a surgeon at Taunton, that gentleman, as well as his friend Mr. Robert Young, then a banker in the same town, wrote to Montgomery, giving him an account of the deceased; thus commencing a correspondence which was long kept up. Mr. Standert occasionally used his pen in the pages of polite literature, and also, we believe, in the service of his own profession; his friend Young meanwhile removing to London, where he died.

M. S. was not the only female whom sorrow led at this time to make her admiration of the poet's verses the prelude to a claim on his personal sympathies. A tale of misfortune was brought to him in a long letter from Mrs. Le Noir, of Reading, who rejoices to have found out that "Alcæus" is Mr. Montgomery. "He is a printer; I am as much of one as a woman can be—being a partner in such a trade; he is a poet, I am the daughter of one, with some slight pretensions to rhyming myself: but he is unfortunate—ah! there I can match him indeed. I am one of two daughters of the late Christopher Smart, of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, an unfortunate poet: I hardly remember him; his mind was early disordered, and his fortunes always so. He died within the rules of the King's Bench. My mother carried on, with her eldest brother, the business of printing and bookselling in this town, which

* Works, p. 287

had been *her* father's." And then followed a history of personal and family disasters more than sufficient to induce Montgomery to receive and pay for a volume, "although merely a novel," from the pen of his correspondent.

Dayes, the artist, has noticed in his "Tour" * the scenery at a spot called "Smithy Wood Bottom," about two miles south of Sheffield; it was during a solitary walk through this once pleasant glen, that the moralising poem entitled the "Molehill"† was suggested, and partly composed. Montgomery had frequently noticed on the green sward the clusters of earth-casts, but he had never seen at work the animal which thus "scoops with curious toil her subterranean bed:" nor had he ever seen a *mole-trap*, with the description of which he was much amused. This piece, and the "Cast-away Ship,"‡ to which he added a "Sequel" in 1810, were originally published in Dr. Aikin's "Athenæum."

The verses on "Pope's Willow"§ were written for the Rev. Dr. Philipps of Sheffield, and by him carefully preserved as long as he lived, in an urn, which had been made from a portion of the trunk of the celebrated Twickenham tree.

Among Montgomery's correspondents at this period was R. H. Cromek, a respectable engraver, but better known as having suggested Stothard's celebrated picture the "Pilgrimage to Canterbury." He was an enthusiastic admirer of the poetry of Chaucer, of Montgomery, and especially of Burns; besides, he wrote "a good letter," autograph included; which is more than can be said of every artist; although some

* Page 16.
† Works, p. 285.
‡ Ibid. p. 222.
§ Ibid. p. 278.

manifest as much surprise at finding that a person may *engrave*, who does not write "a fair hand," as Crabbe does, to find that the rustic who makes a straight line a mile long with his plough in the field, cannot do the same for an inch or two with his pen, when signing his name to his marriage in the parish register! On New Year's Day, Cromek called upon Montgomery, on his way to the "Land of Burns," in that quest after "relics" of the Ayrshire poet which, perhaps, was rather *too* successful. He had announced his intention to visit Sheffield, in a note containing the following lively passage:—

"I must now tell you that I have taken a very great freedom with your name—I have affixed it to one of my own productions—I have called my sweet little girl after an author whose poetry has again and again thrilled my heart. What may be the fate of this little sprout of the most ardent reciprocal affection, Heaven only can tell. This I know, that, at present, when I sit and watch her on her mother's lap, I have sensations that I would not exchange for an universe! Whether a new feeling has been created in my bosom, or an old and dormant one brushed up, I cannot just now determine; but I feel a pulse at my heart that I hope will beat there to the last moment of my existence. Poor Maria Montgomery! receive the benediction of a friend—of a father, in the unpublished words of the Prince of Poets:—

"'Gude grant that thou may ay inherit,
Thy mither's person, grace an' merit,
An' thy poor worthless dadie's spirit
Without his failins;
'Twill please him mair to hear an' see it
Than stocket mailins.'

"I had at my christening, a fortnight since, a small and select party—my good friend Hopwood, a part of his family, and Chantrey. I had the pleasure of proposing and drinking

*heartily* your health, and the health of the Misses Gales. Homer's gods and goddesses never drank their nectar with more glee."

Cromek's child was not the only one to which a parent gave the name of "Montgomery," in baptism, as an evidence of respect for the Sheffield poet.

A similar compliment was paid to him in 1848 by one of his admirers in Leeds, who, after hesitating some time, at length announced to Montgomery the liberty he had taken with his name. The latter, in his reply, said :—

"Though it was very considerate of you to keep back your letter six months, you did well to send it at last under the impression which you so candidly state, and which I hope will not be quite disappointed in the result. . . .

"*On the Baptism of the Son of Mr. Kirkby, of Elmwood Grove, near Leeds, by the name of James Montgomery.*

"The name which to your son is given,
When writ on earth be writ in Heaven,
And the 'new name,' on that 'white stone,' *
Which Christ bestows upon his own,
Through time and death, his passport be,
To life and immortality.

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Sheffield, Oct. 2. 1848."

Cromek called upon Montgomery on his way back to London, and not only gave him an entertaining account of his adventures in Scotland as a "relic hunter," an and enthusiastic description of Stothard's picture, but was deeply interested with the conversation of our friend relative to the poetical beauties of the highly picturesque scene, so successfully portrayed by the artist. *Holland:* "It is, I believe, generally

* Rev. ii. 17.

understood that Cromek's pilgrimage to the land of Burns was a very fortunate one for him, in a pecuniary point of view?" *Montgomery:* "It was so: indeed he was little prepared—highly as he estimated the reliques—to receive 500*l.* for the volume, as published by Cadell and Davies; but they well knew what they were about, and lost nothing by their liberality." *Holland:* "Cromek, although he detected some of the impositions of Burns, in having passed off his own verses as parts of old songs, allowed his love of traditionary Scottish ballad poetry to expose him to be duped by a series of fictitious pieces composed by Allan Cunningham, at that time a young man, working as a stone-mason on the banks of the Nith." *Montgomery:* "I was long ago made aware of that circumstance; and I have always felt it acting as a drawback on my estimate of the moral integrity of Cunningham." *Holland:* "I am glad to find my own view of the disingenuousness of that transaction corroborated by your opinion. Some persons may regard the trick of the Nithsdale poet merely as an evidence of great ingenuity, or, at the worst, as a good literary joke: but I confess it appears to me very like an abuse of that unsuspecting confidence which one man of genius too implicitly placed in the formal testimony of another." * It is curious, that about the same time that "honest Allan," a shrewd Scotchman, was imposing spurious songs upon the unsuspecting Yorkshire collector, a Durham gentleman of far higher literary pretensions,

* In 1847, these poems were reprinted by a son of Mr. Cunningham's, who does not appear to be conscious of any impropriety in the circumstances of deception which attended their earliest appearance. The same may be said of the republication of the spurious ballads given by Surtees to Sir Walter Scott: unless, indeed, which is very probable, he never became aware of the deception practised upon him.

the late Mr. Surtees, was in like manner deceiving the astute and critical Walter Scott with ancient border ballads, the productions of his own pen! Cromek promised to give Montgomery a copy of the "Pilgrimage to Canterbury;" but as he died long before the engraving was finished, his widow faithfully fulfilled her husband's intention; and a "proof impression" of this beautiful work of art occupied a conspicuous place in the sitting room of our poet, as it did also in that of Sir Walter Scott; indeed, as Mrs. Bray says*, "Few houses where the master has a library, or has any pretensions to a love or knowledge of the fine arts, are without the print, framed, and hung in a conspicuous place."

Montgomery's pen was exercised through several numbers of the "Iris" at the commencement of this year in animadverting on Cobbett's "Vindication of War." He regarded Cobbett, at this time, as "unquestionably the ablest political writer of the day;" but, in consequence of his vacillating opinions and political inconsistencies, he already thought meanly of the man, and still more so when, after serving almost every party in turn without being faithful to any, he was at last deservedly despised by all.

"In some points, however," says Montgomery (Oct. 20. 1807), "we must acknowledge his immutable consistency;—he has ever been the enemy of extended commerce, the knight-errant of military glory, the advocate of popular ignorance, and the champion of merciless warfare."

On all these subjects, the opinions of Cobbett and the sentiments of Montgomery, were the antipodes of each other, as the pages of the "Iris," amply testify. It was especially as the advocate for peace, that Mont-

* "Life of Stothard;" where will be found a particular account of the origin and progress both of the picture and the engraving.

gomery, during the long period of his editorship, manifested an unwavering consistency, neither his pen, his conversation, nor his practice, ever belying the motto prefixed to his newspaper. We transcribe a single passage from his answer to Cobbett, who had argued that war was necessary to call forth the exercise of the heroic virtues!

"Yet, utterly denying the necessity of war, we contend that, 'in the present state of the world,' there are as many occasions in peace that give birth, energy, and employment to these virtues as can be truly useful to mankind. Is there no courage displayed in rescuing our fellow creatures from shipwreck and from flames? None in visiting, at the peril of health and of life itself, the haunts of infectious disease? Is there no heroism in the resistance of petty as well as of powerful oppression at home? None in enterprising adventures of discovery abroad? Is there no fortitude in quietly enduring the common calamities of life? No magnanimity in abstaining from vindictive violence, overcoming evil by good, and patiently outliving the malice of slander?* Or are these noble and ennobling virtues confined to *man*, since he alone ought to be 'personally engaged' in war? No! some of the sublimest examples of courage in encountering and fortitude in bearing the most appalling dangers, and the most cruel sufferings, remain recorded in the history of *woman*; millions more, performed by her in unostentatious privacy, have never been recorded at all by

* It will perhaps surprise some persons to learn that in this Montgomery seems merely to have echoed the "right royal" opinion of one who has been much and often blamed as entertaining very different sentiments. King George the Third, in a letter to Bishop Hurd, July 23. 1782, avows "an idea, that, if ever mankind reflect, they must allow that those who encourage religion, virtue, and literature, deserve as much solid praise as those who disturb the world, and commit all the horrors of war to gain the reputation of being heroes."—*Bentley's Miscellany*, vol. xxvi. p. 332.

ungenerous and ungrateful man; who in all ages has been jealous to monopolise to himself the credit of those magnificent qualities. The courage of the warrior in battle is not greater than the heroism of woman in love; his loyalty cannot exceed her constancy, even when most wantonly tempted or most wickedly assailed. The sacrifice of *him* who leaves his country and friends, with the blessing of both on his head, in the joyful hope of returning to them covered with laurels and enriched with spoils, must not be named in comparison with the sacrifices of *her* who abandons her home and connections in despair of ever beholding them again, to follow a lover unworthy of her affection — an exile, an outlaw — all over the world. The hardships of a winter campaign in the forests and morasses of Poland are less harassing and heart-breaking than the miseries which woman — weak, willing, uncomplaining woman — suffers, by day and by night, in the solitude and gloom of a sick chamber; tenderly, anxiously, watching for weeks and months, and years (as we have *known it* *), every look, every motion

* We do not know to what or whether to any particular instance of female fidelity and tenderness, Montgomery here alludes as having come within his personal knowledge. He once mentioned the subject to us in general terms, when speaking of his intention to have written a poem on the subject of "Woman." We *do*, however, recollect him mentioning an instance fourteen years afterwards, to which the expressions in the text too sadly applied. Agnes, only daughter of the Rev. John Steinhauer, a Moravian minister, was married, in June 1808, to the Rev. Ignatius Montgomery, of Gracehill, near Ballymena, Ireland. *Holland:* "Your sister-in-law appears to be a lady of very superior mental accomplishments." *Montgomery:* "There are others besides you who think so; and, I assure you, I am one of the number. My brother has now (June 1822) been unable to leave his bed for several months, and it is truly affecting to witness the self-devotion of this excellent woman. in her attention to such an afflicted creature. In her solicitude to minister to his comfort and alleviate his sufferings, she willingly foregoes, except in the sick chamber, the exercise of those fine talents which are calculated to make her the delight and admiration of all around her."

of an afflicted husband or a declining child. These are not exaggerated pictures of the heroic worth of woman. Every heart that has warmed at the embrace of a mother, or fluttered at the known footstep of the gentlest of friends, will bear testimony to the truth of our representations. Mr. Cobbett may reply, that woman *is* sometimes '*personally engaged*' in war, in following her hero to the field of conflict, and in nursing him while he lies wounded and disabled in his tent. The advocate of war is welcome to all the benefit which such a fact can afford him, in proof of the necessity of fighting and bloodshed, that the transcendent excellence of woman may thus be made manifest."—*Iris*, March 1. 1808.

The January number of the "Eclectic" contained Montgomery's critique on Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads," &c.*, concerning which he had thus written to the editor three months previously:—

"I am almost sure that you and I differ very widely in our opinions concerning Wordsworth's talents, and perhaps more concerning his performances. My free, sincere, and utterly unbiassed sentiments I send you, not at all dreading your displeasure, because I hold a poet's merits in higher estimation than you do. I know that when you engage me to review any work, it is my own judgment that you require me to exercise, and you do not expect that it shall always be in consonance with yours. I feel exceeding great reluctance to censure the works of a man of high and noble genius, however unworthy of him, because I am aware that the vivid imagination of poets, which I doubt not is always accompanied with equal self-complacency, often seduces them into errors which they know not to be such, but mistake them for excellencies of the purest order, when they are nothing but delirious wanderings from truth and nature. Yet it is hard to punish them for such follies, as if they had been

* Eclectic Review. vol. iv. p. 35.

guilty of crimes: lenity is not the character of any existing Review, nor are any of our periodical critics too lavish of praise. I hope that your readers will find as much rigour of censure in this article as will reconcile them to the warmth of commendation which I have most honestly and heartily bestowed on Wordsworth's undeniable merits. The cry is up; and it is the fashion to yelp him down. I belong not to the pack, nor will I wag my tongue or my tail, on any occasion, to please the multitude. I am conscious of no personal partiality to prejudice me in favour of Wordsworth. I am sure the poetry of two men cannot differ much more widely than his does from mine. I hate his baldness and vulgarity of phrase, and I doubt not he equally detests the splendour and foppery of mine; but I feel the pulse of poetry beating through every vein of thought in all his compositions, even in his most pitiful, puerile, and affected pieces. To *you* I need not add that his frigid mention of my name in his first note has not influenced me to speak more favourably of him than I otherwise should have done. It is a proud and almost contemptuous notice which he has taken of me and my 'Daisy' (I won't change *mine* for his *three daisies*), and was more calculated to mortify and provoke a jealous temper than to soothe and disarm one who had the power and the opportunity to humble a rival in the eye of the public. No! I am persuaded, in my own mind, that I have done him justice to the best of my knowledge. I only regret that you will probably derive less satisfaction from the perusal of this essay than you might have done had our opinions been in perfect harmony. You must not be alarmed at the apparent length; for though the first four pages are closely written, the following ones are loose, and the whole will make no more, I believe, than eight of yours at the most. I confess that I tore myself from poetry to criticism, on this occasion, with excessive reluctance. My mind was so alive with images and sentiments connected with my West Indian Poem, that I did violence to my most favourite feelings to undertake this review. I hope nobody but you, and my own binding promise, could have moved me

to do it. You will probably find that this article is written with more than usual stiffness; but indeed I could not help it. Only half of my heart was engaged in it, and the other half has been repining all the while at the interruption and loss of time. This is not often the case; but the poem on which I am at present engaged has so deeply and divinely interested me, that it has been great self-denial to suspend my meditations on it just at this time, when I am in the very heart of it. I intended to complete it, if possible, within this year, and I do not yet despair. I can, however, very conscientiously say, that, under these circumstances, I have done my utmost to serve you in the composition of this critique, and I have endeavoured to make the extracts as interesting as possible. I have plucked the most exquisite flowers in Wordsworth's parterre to present to your readers. You yourself will not deny that some of these are very beautiful."

"I entered," said Montgomery to Mr. Everett, "into a long argument on the principles of poetry laid down in the celebrated 'Preface,' showing that the poet was often most happy when he departed from his own rules. There was," continued he, "an amusing incident connected with *that* review. Not very long after its appearance, I was in London, where I met with Mr. Henry Crabb Robinson, a gentleman of taste, well known as a zealous admirer of Wordsworth, and who, among other topics of discourse, made some observations on Mr. Wordsworth's poetry; he expressed himself as being indignant at the treatment which his friend had received from the reviewers, descanting particularly on the critique in the 'Eclectic!' The writer of that article, he remarked, was the only person among the authors of all the reviews he had read who understood the character of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry, and yet it was evident, on the very face of the matter, that he was

afraid, — that he had not *spirit* enough to speak out his full praise." *Everett:* "Did you make any reply?" *Montgomery:* "Not I; — though that very silence would with some persons have been construed into at least a confession of complicity; but I suffered the remark to pass, as a matter of course." *Everett:* "Were you able to maintain your gravity during his observations?" *Montgomery:* "O yes; though amused, I listened with perfect composure, conscious as I was of the justice of my critical remarks, and of the kindly spirit in which I had written them." *Everett:* "Wordsworth was certainly treated with unjust and indiscriminating severity by some of the reviewers." *Montgomery:* "There is no doubt of that. The truth is, Wordsworth's mental scope in his higher moods is too great for the generality of poetic readers. There is always one merit in him, — he follows nature. He is often extremely prosaic; but for this he is almost sure to reward you with deep thought. I was informed that when he saw my critique, and long before he knew by whom it was written, he acknowledged the justice of the general argument."

"In Mr. Wordsworth's poetry," says Montgomery in the review itself, "more perhaps than in that of any other man, we frequently find images and sentiments which we have seen and felt a thousand times, without particularly *reflecting* on them, and which, when presented by him, flash upon us with all the delight and surprise of novelty :—

> "'The swan on still St. Mary's lake
> *Floats double*, swan and shadow!'" *

This elegant thought seems to have been reflected in the mirror of Montgomery's mind when he wrote the following lines, confessedly worthy of their proto-

* Vol. ii. p. 34.

type, though probably not original in either Montgomery or Wordsworth.

> "Where poised as in the centre of a sphere,
> A ship above and ship below appear;
> A double image pictured on the deep,
> The vessel o'er its shadow seems to sleep."
>
> *Greenland,* Canto I.

In his reviews, it is curious to observe how generally he has quoted as favourable specimens, those passages which are imbued with feelings and sentiments analogous to his own. Montgomery having himself been a visitor at Tintern Abbey, he must have *felt* in all their force the emotions so exquisitely interfused through the lines of Wordsworth on that subject, which appeared in the volume under review. The writer of this page has heard him relate an incident of a whimsical cast which occurred during his visit to that place. Walking among the magnificent ruins of Tintern, Montgomery observed a lady to be diligently employed in searching for some fragment to carry away as a memento of her visit. He, in the impulse of the moment, with no thought but the disposition to gratify his fair fellow-visitor, said he would assist her; and taking up a stone that was at hand, he proceeded to knock off a piece of the reticulated sculpture of a statue representing a warrior in chain armour. This was noticed by the keeper of the place, who, calling out, bade him desist; and so much had the simple intention of serving the lady at that moment occupied his mind, that it was not till thus disturbed in his reverie that he discovered himself in an act of spoliation, which, said he, "I should have thought myself the last man in the world to have committed." *

* For a notice of the more humiliating act of mischief done to a fraternal statue of this same Earl of Chepstow, which formerly

In a long letter to Montgomery, dated January 9th, Parken tells him that he has sent some of his unpublished poems for the perusal of a brother reviewer, John Foster*, of Frome, and author of *the* "Essays," apologising for what he fears may be "a heinous offence." In the closing sentence he says, in allusion to a sentiment often inculcated by the poet, "How could you let out that secret—which indeed Cowper had let out before you—that poetising is not a sudden spontaneous effusion of an excess of spirit, furious, inspired by some supernatural power! If your remark is true of any writer, it must be peculiarly true of Gray, a man that never was in love!"

*James Montgomery to Daniel Parken.*

"Sheffield, Feb. 2. 1808.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"Here is my funeral criticism (though some people will mistake it for a sermon, and sleep under it) on H. K. White. I have not time to copy it over again, and correct a great deal of slovenly language which you will find in it. Pray do not abridge any part of it that is not absolutely and unpardonably redundant. You may think it very long (and so may all your readers); but I think it is very short and meagre. I ought to have occupied twice the space to do justice either to the deceased or myself. My thoughts are crowded to death; but, you will say, so much the better, for three-fourths of them are superfluous. Be it so; but the subject is so deeply interesting, that, with the quotations in particular (which are much too few and too brief), be sparing of the pruning knife. Another fault you may

stood in front of Reginald's Tower, Waterford,—and by a poet, too, if the perpetrator of the mischief was, as believed, the author of the famous Irish song, "De nite afore Larry was stretch'd,"—*vide* "Sketches of Ireland Sixty Years ago," Dublin, 1847, p. 85.

* It appears from a marked copy of the "Eclectic" now before us, and formerly belonging to Sir J. B. Williams, that Foster was the author of one hundred and sixty-five articles in that review.

find;—I have been too lavish of commendation. Now that is exactly in the spirit of a modern reviewer; for, recollect, the poor lad is dead; praise can do him no good now; therefore, we may bestow as much upon him as we please. So much for critics and criticism: I wish I durst have said as much in the article itself. Now, observe, that I engage *not* to write another line for the 'Eclectic Review' before the middle of April at the earliest: when as I promise to do nothing, you may rely on my performance; therefore, you may set your heart at rest on my account. In honest truth, it will not be in my power to do anything sooner. Last Wednesday morning, just as I was sitting down in good earnest to Kirke White, with a mind collected for the task, after six months' silence, after three weeks' neglect of a letter which I had written to him, came an epistle from Mr. Bowyer, full of most liberal professions. This quite disconcerted my plan of examining these volumes without any interruption, and threw all my ideas into disorder, besides imposing on me the task of writing *four* long letters respecting my poem. I have not time to tell you all, but he informed me that Campbell, Grant, and Hannah More, had deserted him; or, at least, that he could not depend on them for *time*. He had, therefore, determined to publish Grahame's poem and mine only. But, lo! while he was yet writing to me, arrived a letter from Grahame, requiring him to publish his poem in the course of six weeks; otherwise, the author would wish to publish it himself. This alarmed and embarrassed poor Bowyer extremely, and he filled up his paper with plans and propositions to me, which I cannot detail to you at present, and which will not be worth telling when I write again. However, the result is this, that I must finish my poem immediately. Three parts are written, but want revisal and correction. The fourth is hardly begun, and this, including the preparation of the former for the press, will at least occupy every leisure hour that I can spare till the middle of March. I shall then be quite exhausted, and I must have a month's rest both from poetry and criticism. I enclose the first and second parts of my poem in their present condition; the second, in particular,

will require severe revision. Keep them only *ten days* from the receipt of this parcel, which will be on Thursday next (Feb. 4). Therefore, *I entreat* (I would *command* you if I durst, but I lie at your mercy) that you will return them by coach on the 14th or 15th instant without fail. I send you my only copy, and cannot spare it longer. *Do not let any body see any part of it*, and do not think this a hard injunction. . . . God bless you,

"Your friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. D. Parken, London."

On the 28th of February, Montgomery writes to Aston, and asks him to return the MS. of his drama, which he had lent him for three weeks, and he had kept it "twice as many months." He adds:—

"I am very well satisfied with your criticism, which I presume must be just, generous as it is, because the only four friends to whom the copy was previously entrusted, separately, yet unanimously, passed the same sentence upon it. But neither its merits nor its frailties are now of any consequence; both are doomed to irrevocable oblivion. I never will attempt to mend a syllable of it; and, unless my capricious mind take some new and stranger turn than even it has done, I shall never write for the stage in any form again. I thank you most sincerely for your magnanimous forbearance [in not showing the MS.], when your friend Young [the actor] was in Manchester. I confided in your friendship to keep my secret, and you have honoured my confidence and gratified my heart. . . . My poems continue to sell, and I have received recent testimonies from strangers of that heartfelt and heart-cheering approbation which a poet loves best; and in which neither personal friendship nor enmity, neither false favour nor prejudice are mingled. I have finished my poem on the Slave Trade, to be published in Mr. Bowyer's magnificent work, but it will not appear till the 1st of January, 1809. It exceeds nine hundred lines. Messrs. Longman and Co. have procured

for me very liberal terms. Mr. Bowyer is to give me one hundred pounds for the privilege of an edition of one thousand copies, beside six copies of the two guinea volume."

In a subsequent letter (July 23.), he says, "The *fourth* edition of my 'Wanderer' is printing at Edinburgh."

The "Eclectic" for February, this year, contained a severe article on a mischievous book—Nightingale's "Portraiture of Methodism." Alluding to this, Montgomery, in a letter to Parken, says:—

"I read over the review of Nightingale's work, with an interest that made me shudder. I have not seen his book, and have no desire to see it. I do vehemently suspect that you wrote that article. I think it would have driven me out of my senses had I been the subject of it; I do not deny that he deserved all, and perhaps more than all, that you gave him; but is there not another passage in the little book of Jude, besides that which you have quoted — something about Michael contending with the devil? Forgive the hint: it comes from a very sore mind. I have, perhaps, more fellow-feeling for a miserable backslider than you, who have kept your first estate, can have. I see that the unfortunate man has most angrily and impotently replied, in the 'Monthly Repository:' he had better have held his peace, or ran with all his might to a Methodist class-meeting, and once more sought and found mercy. God forgive him — and me too! For though I never durst rail against God and his people, I know what it is to feel that enmity against both which makes others who are bolder rail at them."

Montgomery had just received from Parken Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel" and "Marmion," in acknowledging which (March 16.), he expresses, after a comparison between him and another poet, an opinion from which it is probable many persons will dissent.

"Walter Scott is an admirable writer; but Henry Kirke

White — dare I say so, even to you?—would have been a much greater poet. Walter Scott is a poet *sui generis;* but whenever he steps on modern ground, he is only one of the weakest of us: in his magic circle he is inimitable; out of it, 'a gentleman who writes with ease.' This is my sincere opinion; but if I durst, I would not tell the public quite so much."

Less disputable is the following contrast in the review of Kirke White's "Remains," &c.*

"In almost every point, except talents, Henry Kirke White and Thomas Dermody were the antipodes of each other. Few, perhaps, of the reliques of either will continue to astonish and delight the public beyond the present generation; but the stories of both will most probably be had in everlasting remembrance,—the one as a cheering example, the other as a terrible warning to youthful poets, when struggling with poverty, or assailed by temptation."

After apologising to Parken for sending the review of "Marmion" by instalments, Montgomery writes (April 10.)—

"It is Sunday, and, without being a hypocrite, I can conscientiously affirm, that I seldom concern myself with business or friendship on the Sabbath,—which is, however, to me no day of rest, but generally of double gloom and despondency. I know this is my own fault; and that I am an insane self-tormentor. Yet, why is it not otherwise? If I could help it, would I be miserable from choice? And how miserable I am, the great Searcher of hearts only knows; for he only knows what an insincere, unbelieving creature I am, and how much I grieve his good Spirit, which has not yet departed entirely from me, though my disobedience and enmity and rebellion seem to grow stronger and bolder the more I experience of the mercy and long-suffering of my Creator and Redeemer. But I must shut my

* Eclectic Review, vol. iv. p. 193.

bosom from you, though it is ready to burst. If you knew me, you might, perhaps, cease to love me, but you would not cease to pray for me."

These sad expressions evidently both pained and puzzled Parken, who immediately responded in such terms as the Scriptures supply for the relief of "a broken and contrite heart," and closing very judiciously with "they who *look on Him whom they have pierced,* and mourn, are to *look unto Him and be saved.*"

The merits of Scott's "Marmion"* are generously appreciated, and the charm of that spirited poem referred to its proper ground; the critic, at the same time, deprecating the "monstrous connection" between the story itself and the "Six Epistles from Ettrick Forest," which were interposed in the form of preludes to the several cantos—an objection in which many readers will hesitate to concur. His next contribution was a review† of Lord Holland's interesting account of the "Life and Writings of Lope Felix de Vega Carpio," who was born at Madrid, Nov. 25. 1562, and who, "if not the greatest of authors, was assuredly one of the most extraordinary;" for the biographers of this "prodigious poet" assert that twenty-one million three hundred thousand of his lines are actually printed, and no less than eighteen hundred plays of his composition have been acted on the stage! He nevertheless asserts, in one of his last poems, that—

> "The printed part, though far too large, is less
> Than that which, yet unprinted, waits the press."‡

To the foregoing must be added a review of Cowper's version of the "Latin and Italian Poems of Milton,"§

* Eclectic Review, vol. iv. p. 407. † Ibid. vol. iv. p. 496.
‡ Lord Holland's Lope de Vega, p. 75.
§ Eclectic Review, vol. iv. p. 780.

and a notice of "Aggiunta ai Componimenti Lirici de' più illustri Poeti d'Italia" of Mathias.*

One of the most amusing, but least satisfactory, productions of his pen in this department, is a review of "The Senses, an Ode,"† in which he has dealt in a style of piquant castigation with a work, no trace of which we ever met with except in this review, which, oddly enough, Dr. Styles, in his "Early Blossoms," has not only attributed to Parken, but quoted it at length, as a specimen of his style!

"How the Doctor could imagine," said Montgomery to us, "that he saw the hand of Parken in it, I cannot tell; but this I know, that I wrote both that article and the remarks on Moore's 'Odes and Epistles,' which he has also copied from the 'Review.' I have written to my friend Dr. Gregory, relative to the mistake, for I am sure Parken, dead or alive, would not thank any one for it."‡

On the 3rd of June, Mary Bailey, of Burngreave, thanks Montgomery for his "charming poem of the Cowslip;"—this is "The Walk in Spring,"§ which contains such a touching allusion to a flower which was not found by the poet in his ordinary walks in the vicinity

* Eclectic Review, vol. iv. p. 930. † Ibid. p. 1019.

‡ We can hardly admit that the "Senses" are altogether unsuited for poetical illustration, however liable an unpractised versifier may be to make "Non-senses" of them, as the critic alleges his author has done. Spenser, in his legend of "Sir Guyon, or of Temperance," describes the senses as the "five great bulwarks" of "the forte of reason."—*Faerie Queene*, book ii. canto xi. The "Palace of the Five Senses," it will be remembered, forms a striking figure in Beckford's "Vathek." At all events, while Montgomery appears to have intended his remarks to stand as a beacon to caution poetical adventurers, who are in quest of a subject, not to approach those shores where there are nothing but rocks and quicksands, and where shipwreck is almost inevitable, he at the same time shows that the playfulness manifested by "Gabriel Silvertongue," in the "Whisperer," had not entirely forsaken him.

§ Works, p. 279.

of Sheffield. About the same time he wrote his "imitation" of the celebrated Swiss song, "Ranz des Vaches,"* without being aware that his friend Standert had made a closer version of the French original.

An address of congratulation to the king on the successful efforts of Spain and Portugal against the tyrant of France, and voted at a public meeting held at the Cutlers' Hall, Sheffield, September 23rd, was written by Montgomery, with the exception of one paragraph in allusion to the convention of Cintra.† It was his opinion, in common with many others, that the British arms had been disgraced by the transaction alluded to; but he could not be persuaded to think it proper to upbraid his Majesty with the improper conduct of those individuals who had acted at the head of the victorious forces, in the same address which was to congratulate him on the success of their arms. Others, however, thought differently, and the paragraph enclosed with brackets in the transcript below, was added by another hand. ‡

* Works, p. 281.

† Montgomery associates the transaction mentioned in the text, with the locality assigned to it by the newspapers of the day: but it seems the signing of that memorable convention, and other proceedings connected with it, took place at a distance of thirty miles from the often-praised village of Cintra.—Vide Napier's *History of the Peninsular War.*

‡ "TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

"MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

"We, your Majesty's faithful, affectionate, and most loyal subjects, the burgesses and free tenants of Sheffield, and the gentlemen, clergy, merchants, manufacturers, and other inhabitants of the town of Sheffield and its neighbourhood, being truly grateful to Divine Providence for the benefits which we enjoy under your Majesty's Government, and peculiarly sensible of the value of NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE,—the blessing which secures to us the quiet possession of every other,—approach your Majesty's throne

to express our ardent admiration of the noble spirit which animates the patriots of Spain to resist, even to death, the atrocious aggressions of a foreign usurper, who has laid the fairest provinces of Europe in fetters at the foot of France, and whose ambition of empire might feel no restraint but the limits of land and ocean, had not Britain interposed a barrier between the violence of his power and the subjugation of the globe.

"Thus cordially sympathising with the brave Spaniards in their struggle against his overwhelming encroachments, it was with unmingled approbation, that we beheld your Majesty, in magnanimous condescension stretching forth the *right hand* of fellowship and the *strong arm* of succour to a gallant and generous people who had been enemies by compulsion, while they remained under the influence of tyranny from abroad, but who naturally and instantaneously became your Majesty's allies and friends when they determined to be independent at home.

"We pray fervently that, under the guidance of the God of battles, who at his pleasure gives victory to the feeble, and scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts, the patriot armies of Spain, united with those of Great Britain, may gloriously triumph in the end, and that their efforts may not only restore independence beyond the Pyrenees, but that their success may be the signal, the pledge, and example of freedom to all the nations of Europe.

"We further congratulate your Majesty on the auspicious commencement of hostilities against the common enemy in Portugal; and we particularly rejoice that the battles of Roleia and Vimeira, having brought the conflicting armies into decisive competition, proved that the British soldiers are worthy brethren to British sailors, and that *the island Genius of our country* is irresistible on shore, as he is invincible at sea.

["We cannot, however, refrain from expressing a deep regret, that our gallant army in Portugal, after having so bravely defeated the enemy, should be witnesses to the convention which their commanders have thought necessary to accede to; the terms of which, we humbly conceive, should only have been demanded by a victorious army, and which we are utterly at a loss to conjecture any circumstance that could justify.]

"Brief be the future warfare; and long may your Majesty live to see the peace and prosperity of these kingdoms and of the whole world substantially and permanently restored! and may posterity to the latest generation, from the issue of this awful contest, have cause to bless the reign and memory of your Majesty!"

# CHAP. XXXIII.

## 1808.

POLITICAL COMMENTS IN THE "IRIS." — SPIRITED PERSONAL CONTROVERSY. — RECLAMATION OF POETICAL CREDIT. — THE FLAX FLOWER. — VISIT TO LONDON. — INTERVIEW WITH FRIENDS. — PARKEN, DR. GREGORY, JOSIAH CONDER, AND BASIL MONTAGUE. — DR. PARR, HIS PIPE, AND HIS OPINIONS. — THE AIKINS. — LETTERS FROM BLOOMFIELD AND COLERIDGE. — ANONYMOUS EPIGRAMS. — "ENGLISH BARDS AND SCOTCH REVIEWERS."

"FROM Spain and Sweden, at this moment the most interesting countries of Europe, we have no intelligence of moment. Further, but still vague and desultory, accounts of the tumult at Madrid state the carnage among the inhabitants, in the streets, and in their dwellings, to have been dreadfully great. From six to ten thousand lives are said to have been lost. The check which the Swedes lately experienced in their invasion of Norway has been counterbalanced by some advantages gained over the Russians in Finland. A foot of our own country is worth a league of the enemy's."—*Iris*, May 31.

Owing to a misconception or misconstruction of the foregoing paragraph, and some expressions relative to a bill then pending in parliament, contained in the same recapitulation of "Facts and Rumours," Montgomery was most unwillingly entangled in the meshes of a newspaper controversy. A correspondent of the "Sheffield Mercury," signing "S. N. U.," animadverted with more severity than discretion on the above passage,

and on some other matters affecting the candour and impartiality of the editor of the "Iris." On the appearance of this letter, Montgomery immediately reprinted it in his own paper, and called upon the writer to come forward openly. This summons not being complied with, he waited upon the proprietor of the "Mercury," and insisted on his giving up the name of the writer of the letter. This information having been furnished, Montgomery, on the following Tuesday, addressed his antagonist—a well-known individual in the neighbourhood—by name, and at considerable length.

Spiritedly as the disputants conducted themselves on both sides, and interesting as the discussion was at the time, it would probably appear otherwise now. We shall, therefore, only transcribe a passage or two, less because they are connected with the essentials of the controversy than as illustrating the personal views and feelings of the party attacked. In his first letter, "S. N. U." says:—

"The weekly recapitulation of 'Facts and Rumours' contained in your paper of Tuesday last, is of so insinuating and insidious a cast, that it ought not, nor shall it pass *sub silentio*. I therefore take the liberty thus publicly to animadvert upon it, in hopes that you will oblige the public and myself with an explanation, which may carry the conviction, that the insertion of the recapitulation in question was from motives the most purely patriotic. The first paragraph, although almost incomprehensible, I should infer, means to convey the marked censure of the editor on the aid which government has given to the gallant king and people of Sweden; for, after coldly stating in *five short lines* that from 6000 to 10,000 lives had been sacrificed in Madrid to the merciless tyranny of that insatiate and atrocious monster Bonaparte, you almost in the same breath tell your readers, that the check experienced by the Swedes

in Norway has been counterbalanced by some advantages gained over the Russians in Finland: and having thus given the fable — lo the moral! 'A foot of our own country is worth a league of the enemy's!' Wondrous apposism— admirable ingenuity! I will not anticipate the reply to the question I wish to ask of you; viz., whether this moral be not thus preposterously introduced for the insidious purpose to which I before alluded? But I cannot here avoid remarking, that a foot of Norway, if I mistake not, relatively, is, to this country, worth *leagues of the deserts of Egypt, although manured by the remains of many hundreds of our brave countrymen.* 'The Talents,' those 'Friends of the People,' think otherwise, and so I presume does their friend the editor of the 'Iris.' John Bull, however, will take the sturdy liberty of judging for himself, and not 'all the Talents' in the world can persuade him 'that the moon is made of green cheese.'"

This letter concludes with—

"One other short observation, and I have done: if yours 'are the plans of fair, delightful peace, *unwarped* by *party rage*, to live like brothers'—every *tree* is known *by his own fruit.*

After having replied to the charge brought against what his correspondent calls a "wondrous apposism," Montgomery proceeds:—

"Your allusion to Egypt I do not clearly comprehend; and I disdain to follow your example, by attributing to you a meaning in it which never entered your thoughts. I recollect *two* expeditions to Egypt; of *both* of which I disapproved. I condemned the last by 'all the Talents,' because I never knew any just cause for undertaking it; and the first by Mr. Pitt I condemned, because it might have been avoided, had he confirmed, as I think he ought to have done, the capitulation agreed upon between the French General in Egypt and Sir Sydney Smith. It is true that I sung the triumph and the fall of Abercrombie, because I glory in the virtue and the valour of my countrymen *when*-ever, and *where*-ever they meet an enemy. That song, sir, will be re-

membered to my honour, when all the ephemeral slanders that surround, and prevent, and pursue me through life, are vanished into oblivion, or only recorded to the disgrace of their authors. This is proud language,—I ought not to have used it,—but I will not retract it: it is the truth, and time will prove it." . . . .

"Finally, sir, mine '*ARE the plans of fair, delightful peace!*' and desiring *to be known by my own fruit*, I appeal to every 'Iris' that I have published from July 1794, to this day, as testimonies of the truth of the motto which they have all borne, and which not one of them has belied. On this point, at least, I may rest my claim to consistency; and it is on this point that I differ decidedly from all party-men; from '*all the Talents*,' with whom you have been pleased to class me; and from '*all the Blocks*,' with whom I presume you rank yourself; because the former neglected to give peace to their country, when it was in their power; and because the latter appear to me neither to seek peace nor to love it."—*Iris*, June 14.

In the next "Mercury," there appeared a long and virulent letter from "S. N. U.," in which, as is generally the case in such controversies, the position of the enemy was considerably altered, and several new points of attack marked out or aimed at. The chastisement, which it might easily be foreseen Montgomery would be likely to incur by the mention of his song, was duly administered, accompanied by a long extract from the castigatory critique on the "Wanderer of Switzerland," from the "Edinburgh Review:"—

"I should," says the writer, "have omitted any comment on your song to the lamented and truly brave Abercrombie,—it does credit to your heart, if sincere!—but when a man *unblushingly* sings his own praises, and that in such proud and lofty strains, he must excuse a little *mild* and *gentle* chiding which I extract from the most popular periodical literary

work of the present day. It is needless to tell *you*, sir, but it is requisite to inform the public, that in reviewing the third edition of the poems, upon which you so highly pride yourself, these Reviewers, men of as transcendent abilities as the kingdom can produce, have pronounced this verdict against you:—[Then follows the extract]."—*Mercury*, June 18.

We shall conclude these extracts with the following paragraph, which is at least as severe as the tirade to which it is a reply:—

"I bow with submission to your chastisement for having boasted of my song. It was very unworthy of me to make that boast, but it was well worthy of you to punish me for it, especially as I had acknowledged my fault. But why could you not correct me yourself? You would have appeared far more respectable to your friends, and you would have been far more formidable to me, in a critical garb of your own, than in the second-hand *fillibegs* (ludicrously too large, by the by) which you have borrowed on the pledge of your brain,—a pledge which you will never redeem,— from the [S.N.U.s] of the north. You are perfectly right, when you say, that, though 'it is needless' to tell *me*, 'it is *requisite to inform the public*' of the verdict of the 'Reviewers, men of as *transcendent abilities* as the kingdom can produce;' for the public continue to read my prohibited book with as much approbation as if it had never been burnt by the common hangman of Parnassus. You recollect having told me, 'that John Bull *will* take the sturdy liberty of judging for himself,' and *not* '*all the Talents*' (including the *transcendent abilities* of the Edinburgh Reviewers,) 'can persuade him that the moon is made of green cheese!'—True, sir: and *John* took this 'sturdy liberty' concerning my poems. The *third edition*, consisting of *two thousand copies*, had just appeared when the Edinburgh Review of them was published. In less than a year and a half, that edition has been so nearly sold off, that *a fourth edition is now printing at Edinburgh itself*. Another word on this subject would be

impertinent:—'No argument like matter of fact is.'"*—*Iris*, June 21.

We once hinted to him, with reference to this controversy, our opinion,—that both parties manifested a sufficient degree of heat. *Montgomery:* "I never was less out of temper in my life; but it was not a time, on many accounts, for me to be lukewarm; and having long enough submitted to insult from anonymous enemies, I had resolved, if ever I was attacked again, I would bring my adversary before the public by name. I saw no reason why I should be compelled to fight blindfolded with one who had his eyes open." *Holland:* "I wondered, at the time, that Todd gave up the name of his correspondent so readily." *Montgomery:* "He was aware of the alternative; for if he had not done so, I should have addressed *him* personally; as it was, my antago-

* He might well so speak, when a stranger, dating from "Rome, state of New York," wrote to him:—"Perhaps a complimentary letter from the banks of the Mohawk is a novelty in England; yet as I am one of your many admirers in these distant forests, I beg leave to address you, whom I am sure it will not displease to be told that tears are shed in these wilds at the pathetic soul-subduing songs of the unfortunate 'Wanderer.' The little village in which I reside is not far removed from such savage scenes as you have described:—

"'Realms of mountains, dark with woods,
In Columbia's bosom lie: . . .
There, in glens and caverns rude,
Silent since the world began,
Dwells the Virgin Solitude,
Unbetrayed by faithless man.'

"The 'Wanderer of Switzerland' has, indeed, an unparalleled popularity in this country: three editions are nearly exhausted in the northern, and I know not what quantity have been printed in the southern states. It is in the hand of every person who has any pretension to taste."

nist conducted his argument with spirit and skill: he was an enemy worth beating. We now speak to each other when we meet." Montgomery used to mention this as one of the most irritating controversies in which his editorial duties and personal opinions ever involved him.

As a pendant to the foregoing statement, we may here mention a little incident of a lighter character. He had copied a paragraph from another newspaper into the "Iris," to the effect, that a wealthy gentleman, somewhat stricken in years, and wishing to have a heir, would be glad to meet with an agreeable single woman, who might happen to be *enceinte*, whom he could make his wife.* In the course of the following week, to the consternation of our editorial Cœlebs, he received no fewer than three confidential communications from females in the situation described, each soliciting his good offices with the quasi advertiser!

September 1., Mr. Ebenezer Rhodes having been elected "Master Cutler," Montgomery was present at the "Feast," which, according to ancient custom, he gave to the members of the corporation and other specially invited guests. Among the latter, on this occasion, was Mr. Robert Montgomery from Woolwich, who, while walking out with the poet on the preceding day, came suddenly upon a field of flax in full flower — beautifully blue: "Brother, what sort of corn is that?" inquired the stranger.— "Such corn as your shirt is made of!" was the prompt reply. We mention this incident as it was pleasantly related to Mr. Holland by Montgomery during their last interview on the day before his death.

* In the appendix to the last edition of the works of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, there is a story of this character recorded in reference to Mr. Edward Montague, vol. iii. p. 451.

Although the amiable editor of the "Eclectic" and his esteemed reviewer had corresponded so frequently during more than two years, they had not as yet personally seen each other.

The visit to London, which he felt could not be avoided without discourtesy to his best friends, distressed the sensitive poet a good deal in the prospect. "It will," said he, "be a fiery trial to me; and I dread being reduced to ashes by it."

In a letter to Dr. Styles, dated Oct. 1., Parken says, "Montgomery is to be in town next week;" and again, after the interview: —

"DEAR SIR,

"Gregory * desires you will go down to sleep at his house to-night; and to-morrow, he and you will see James Montgomery at Woolwich, for he has a brother † there with whom he is going down this afternoon. You can return from Woolwich by dinner time to-morrow, so as to hear Collyer. You have no other chance of seeing J. M. You must not

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* Dr. Olinthus Gregory and the Sheffield poet entertained a cordial respect for each other. In a letter to a friend, the former wrote :—"Mr. Montgomery, whom you mention, is an old and much loved friend of mine. Long have I admired him for his talents and genius, sanctified and adorned as they are by his genuine piety; and much and often have I regretted, that the nature and pressure of his and my engagements respectively prevent our epistolary intercourse from being so regular and frequent as my inclinations would dictate. May I trouble you to present to him my most affectionate remembrances? I should have written to him some months ago, had it not been for the long continuance and recurrence of affliction in my family during the last year and a quarter." The worthy Doctor died at Woolwich, February 2nd, 1841, aged 69. A funeral sermon, preached on the occasion, in Trinity Chapel in that town, by the Rev. Capel Molineux, was printed at the request of the hearers, and a copy of it was sent by Mrs. Gregory to Montgomery.

† Robert Montgomery.

expect to find the soul of an ethereal spirit wrapped in an angelic form; if that were the case, he would be run away with by some squadron of cherubs that sweeps over the earth by moonlight. He is, you know he is, truly a gem; but he is covered over with a frozen sensibility, which perhaps you can neither thaw nor see through." *

At the table of Dr. Gregory he met for the first time with Josiah Conder, young and full of poetry, and destined long to ply an active and useful pen—though, as the columns of the "Patriot" newspaper evince, not always a gentle one—chiefly in the service of politico-religious nonconformity. Differing as the two friends might on some stirring polemical questions, they entirely agreed in their love of religious liberty, and generally in their literary tastes; so that their intercourse, whether by letters or otherwise, was always mutually agreeable.

His old friend Mrs. Skepper had recently become the wife of Basil Montague, and she and her husband were anxious that he should pay them a visit at Merton. He went, accompanied by Daniel Parken; and although he did not there meet Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, as he would have done had he gone in the spring, he was introduced to a more remarkable personage — the celebrated Dr. Parr. It was on a Sunday evening, and a goodly company of intelligent persons of both sexes were present: the Doctor, who was expected, came sailing into the room in full canonicals. When he had taken his seat in the splendid apartment, and surrounded as he was by a considerable number of ladies, his pipe was brought, and several fair hands were presently on the alert to reach him the tobacco, a light, &c., whose owners were doubtless anything but fond of either the sight

* Early Blossoms, p. 200.

or the smell of the volume of smoke which was soon after emitted. It was not this gentle demonstration of homage and adulation on the part of the sex, so natural and amiable in itself, that so much impressed Montgomery at the moment, as his own reflection on the conduct of the individual to whom it was paid: — "And is Dr. Parr," said our friend to himself, "really *so great a man* *, that it is immaterial whoever else be annoyed so that his comfort be secured? Or is he *so little a man* that he cannot, even under such circumstances as these, forego the usual indulgence of his fondness for smoking?" The poet, at a subsequent period, met the old Grecian at the residence of Mr. Roscoe in Liverpool, where he was accommodated with a "smoking room," after, as the story goes, having driven from the house by his fumes Sir J. E. Smith, who seems to have had no taste for any of the modes of "exhibiting" the Indian weed, except that which in the catalogue of the botanist presents "*Tabacum*" as a species of plant belonging to the genus "*Nicotiana*." On this occasion, the Rev. Dr. Raffles and George Bennet, Esq. were present; the former encountering boldly, and, as Montgomery thought, with great advantage in the argument, Dr. Parr's advocacy of cock-fighting and bull-baiting. When the company went into Roscoe's library, Parr seated himself on a chair, drew it near the fire, and turned his back upon every other person present. On seeing this, Montgomery said to himself, "I'll try if I cannot move him into a less unsocial position;" and thereupon he plied the

* "In domestic life, Parr was too great a scholar, and too studious a man, to be the exact favourite of the drawing-room. All was to yield to his wishes, all was to be regulated by his habits. The ladies were obliged to bear his tobacco, or give up his company, and at Hatton now and then he was the tyrant of the fireside." —Johnstone's *Memoirs of Parr*, p. 812.

Doctor with such a close volley of conversation, that presently he began to wheel about in order to face the enemy, to the satisfaction of those who not only enjoyed the loquacity of the speakers, but seemed to guess aright as to the circumstance which occasioned its display.

The gratification which Parken and his friends enjoyed in their brief interviews with the Sheffield poet, was neither more strongly felt nor distinctly acknowledged than that experienced by the editor of the "Monthly Magazine" and his family circle.

"Be assured," writes Dr. Aikin to Montgomery, Dec. 15., "that whatever satisfaction the interview with your Newington friends has given you, it is fully participated by them, and that the remembrance you have left behind is not less pleasing than that which you carried with you. If we recognised in your general manner any of that shrinking reserve which you impute to yourself, we were the more gratified in finding it entirely laid aside before our hearth, while the flow of soul kept an equal course on both parts. I was agreeably surprised on discovering in you not only the mild modesty that I expected, but a degree of hilarity which seemed to announce a temper made for *happiness*, as well as for feeling: and happy I trust you will be, when some of the rubs of life are got over, and the benignity of your nature finds suitable objects to call it into exercise, and obtain adequate returns."

Lucy Aikin, in the memoirs of her father, says:—

"In general, it may safely be affirmed, that there was no poetical merit of his [Dr. Aikin's] time to which he was indifferent; but about this period there arose a poet who engaged his attention in a peculiar manner;—this was Mr. Montgomery. In the 'Wanderer of Switzerland,' and the smaller pieces by which it was accompanied, he discovered a freshness of fancy and a depth of feeling which, in his

judgment, stamped them as true works of genius; at the same time, the tone of melancholy which pervaded them was too genuine and too profound not to excite his sympathy. As it appeared that one, at least, among the causes of the author's dejection was the world's neglect, he endeavoured to cheer him by a few laudatory stanzas on his poems, inserted in the 'Athenæum.' By means of a common friend, Mr. Montgomery was soon apprised to whom he owed this poetical greeting, and he wrote a letter of acknowledgment; this was immediately answered by Dr. Aikin, and thus commenced a correspondence which was carried on for a considerable time with great spirit, and with much frank and interesting disclosure on the part of Mr. Montgomery respecting his early life and the formation of his literary character, without any personal intercourse between the parties. At length, Mr Montgomery visited London, and a meeting took place which proved mutually satisfactory and agreeable, notwithstanding the romantic expectations which the previous circumstances could scarcely have failed to excite. After some time the correspondence languished, but from no other cause than a want of topics of common interest: my father's esteem for Mr. Montgomery always continued unabated, and he never spoke of their intercourse but with sincere pleasure." *

It may be remarked that the esteem here mentioned was returned on the part of Montgomery, who never forgot the well-timed kindness of his early friend; and, as we shall afterwards find, the poet, when he last visited London as a lecturer in the winter of 1835, paid a friendly visit to Miss Aikin, at Stoke Newington. The languishment of the correspondence between the two frank-hearted friends, which Miss Aikin has so gently ascribed to "a want of topics of common interest," must be understood as signifying that the poet

* Memoir of Dr. John Aikin, vol. i. p. 251.

had begun to find in the interchange of communications with evangelical Christians a sympathy of spirit, and a union of motives to action on infinitely important subjects, of which the letters of the amiable Socinian were necessarily void: indeed, it must be apparent that "topics of common interest," in the wide field of polite literature, in which both parties were at the same time engaged, were by no means less plentiful now than they had ever been, except in so far as the difficulty of finding and dealing with them apart from religious considerations, of which their correspondence afforded evidence, contributed to make them rare.

It was during this visit to London that Montgomery called upon Bloomfield, the author of the "Farmer's Boy," having heard that, so far from being in prosperous circumstances, he was under the necessity of employing the joiner's tools to procure a livelihood. One of the articles which Bloomfield was then making was an Æolian harp: this he purchased, and afterwards valued and preserved it for the sake of its ingenious fabricator. When the instrument was forwarded to Sheffield, it was accompanied with the following note: —

*Robert Bloomfield to James Montgomery.*

"London, May 26. 1809.

"DEAR SIR,

"Upbraid me not, if you can help it, for my extreme tardiness. I have had some of the world's cares to buffet with, — a long and severe rheumatic winter, and a total privation of the strength and resolution to attend to music or poetry; — add to this, my son with a broken leg, which, considering it was that which had been long lame, and must continue so, has been as far restored as reason could crave. He is well, and his father is alive again.

"You know the nature of the instrument I send, and therefore I only observe, that if when placed *under* the

lifted sash, or just inside, so as to conduct a current of air through the strings, it should not play satisfactorily, then take off the top board and place the harp alone on the *broadest* edge with the strings rising nearly perpendicularly over each other, and close to an inlet made by lifting the sash about an inch. I have no doubt that it will perform; but I should be glad to hear of any intimations to that effect, at any convenient time. I have been informed that you too have been out of health, or spirits, or both, — I know not which, but hope to hear a good account.

"Your harp, I doubt, is too short to admit of larger strings; but you may possibly enjoy quite as much the extreme softness of the smaller ones: that you may, is my hope: and that you may find some amusement from a thing so frail, and not suffer it to be a 'Harp of Sorrow,' is my ardent desire. What is your Muse about? will not this delightful season set you a-going again? Whether it does, or not, I remain, Sir,

"Your humble servant,

"ROB. BLOOMFIELD."

The following letter, although without date, belongs to this period; it refers to the intended publication of the "Friend," the first number of which appeared in June 1809: —

*S. T. Coleridge to James Montgomery.*

"DEAR SIR,

"In desiring a small packet of these prospectuses to be sent to you from Leeds, I have presumed less on myself than on our common friend, Mrs. Montague; but, believe me, by more than by either I have been encouraged by my love and admiration of your works, and my unfeigned affectionate esteem of what I have been so often and so eloquently told by Mrs. M. of your life and character. Conscious how very glad I should be to serve you in any thing, I apply with less discomfort to you in behalf of my own concerns. What I wish is simply to have the prospectuses placed and disposed

among such places and persons as may bring the work to the notice of those whose moral and intellectual habits may render them desirous to become subscribers. I know your avocations, and dare not therefore ask you for an occasional contribution. I have received promises of support from some respectable writers, and, for my own part, am prepared to play off my whole power of acquirements, such as they are, in this work, as from the main pipe of the fountain.

"If choice or chance should lead you this way, you will find both here and at Greta Hall, Keswick, house-room and heart-room; for I can add Robert Southey's and William Wordsworth's names to my own, when I declare myself with affectionate respect,

"Dear Sir,

"Yours sincerely,

"S. T. COLERIDGE.

"Grasmere, Kendal."

Of Southey's respect for Montgomery we shall adduce other proof hereafter. Wordsworth, in a letter to a friend, says: — "Mr. Montgomery's praise was highly grateful to me; pray tell him so when you write; and add, that I am happy to have repaid in kind the great pleasure which his writings have afforded me."

We may mention at the close of this year a circumstance relating, in strictness, to the beginning of it, and which, if Montgomery's prudence and piety had not been greater than any feeling of personal vindictiveness, afforded him the certainty of at least a temporary triumph over a literary enemy. A packet of epigrams, entitled "Paper Pellets," was sent to him for insertion in the "Iris;" the receipt of these articles he acknowledged in his notices "To Correspondents," but declined the publication of them. They were all directed against

Jeffrey; and were, it was reasonable to suppose, the production of some one who was himself smarting under the lash of the "Edinburgh Review." Montgomery received the packet under the frank of Mr. George Longman, M.P., brother of the chief member of the firm in Paternoster Row, to whose house it was addressed in a cover, with the "Annan" post-mark, for "Mr. James Montgomery, author of the 'Swiss Emigrants.'" When the cartel containing the epigrams and accompanying note was lent to us, Montgomery observed, "I have never suffered a copy of them to be taken lest they should by any means get into print; and for that reason have been careful to whom I have shown them: some of them are, indeed, too filthy for publication." As we should be sorry to violate the delicate reserve of Montgomery, and equally so to defile our pages with what was deemed by him improper for the press, we shall only transcribe the note and the titles.

"SIR,

"I beg that you will insert the enclosed epigrams in your newspaper, and that you will print off 500 copies separately, distributing them (for sale or not as you may think best) among some of the booksellers of London, Cambridge, Oxford, and Edinburgh. I wish for the present to be unknown; but you may rely on the word of an admirer of your poetry, that I shall by some means or other inform myself of what expense or loss you may incur, and remit the amount.

"CANTAB.

"December 29."

The titles of the epigrams, of which "Frank" is the hero, are,—the "Moralist"—the "Bloodless Battle"—the "Prudent Politician"—the "Metamorphoses"—the "Elevation"—the "Creed"—"Epitaph." To

say the least, few epigrammatists ever dealt in keener satire or more bitter irony than the writer of these; and the subject of them, had he known it, might have been thankful to Montgomery for their suppression.

Who was the author of these pungent squibs? Dr. Anderson, in a letter to Bishop, Nov. 18. 1806, says,—"Mr. Boyd has sent me some squibs against Moore; but the humour is coarse and indelicate."* This mere general coincidence in style and time can hardly, however, justify a suspicion that the correspondent of the "Iris" was the translator of Dante. Were they written by Lord Byron? In favour of this supposition, we have not only the avowed conviction of Montgomery himself, and the plain ground of abundant provocation, but the best evidence that his lordship occasionally indulged himself as "a flinger of these hand grenades," a projector of these "paper bullets of the brain," as he calls them in immediate connection with the "Edinburgh Review."† But Montgomery laid more stress on the resemblance between the ideas in two of the epigrams, and those of two lines in Byron's "Sketch from Private Life," afterwards published. The idea in one of the lines *might* have occurred to two individuals; the other, he thought, could *not:* and taking them together, they afforded a strong presumption of identical authorship.

But while Montgomery forbore to retaliate upon his critical assailant by the publication of these bitter pasquinades, their putative author was preparing to avenge the wrong done to himself and his fellow suf-

* Nichol's "Illust. Lit. Hist. 18th Cent." vol. vii. p. 171.

† Moore's "Life and Works of Byron." *Vide* also Medwin's "Life of Shelley," vol. ii. p. 195.; Lady Blessington's "Conversations of Lord Byron," p. 330. 336. *et infra;* Leigh Hunt's "Byron and his Contemporaries," vol. i. p. 90.

ferers by the Aristarchus of the north, in a style no less startling than effective. We allude, of course, to Byron's "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." This famous satire — which, like the "Dunciad," has preserved many an else-forgotten name — was not, indeed, published till the spring of 1809, but it is more conveniently noticed here, as enabling us at the same time to quote the lines in which the noble poet alludes to Montgomery: —

"With broken lyre and cheek serenely pale,
Lo! sad ALCÆUS wanders down the vale!
Though fair they rose, and might have bloomed at last,
His hopes have perished by the northern blast:
Nipped in the bud by Caledonian gales,
His blossoms wither as the blast prevails!
O'er his lost works let *classic* SHEFFIELD weep:
May no rude hand disturb their early sleep!*

"Yet, say! why should the Bard, at once, resign
His claim to favour from the sacred Nine?
For ever startled by the mingled howl
Of Northern wolves that still in darkness prowl;
A coward brood which mangle as they prey
By hellish instinct all that cross their way:
Aged or young, the living or the dead,
No mercy find,—these harpies† must be fed.

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* "Poor MONTGOMERY, though praised by every English Review, has been bitterly reviled by the 'Edinburgh!' After all, the Bard of Sheffield is a man of considerable genius; his 'Wanderer of Switzerland' is worth a thousand 'Lyrical Ballads,' and at least fifty 'Degraded Epics.'"

† We have quoted from the first edition, published in March 1809: the lines exhibit some incongruities of metaphor, which on being afterwards pointed out to the author were altered by him.

Why do the injured unresisting yield
The calm possession of their native field?
Why tamely thus before their fangs retreat,
Nor hunt the bloodhounds back to ARTHUR'S seat?" *

Amidst these literary anxieties and literary compliments, he heard the admonitory voice of a kind Christian friend, with whom he had held spiritual intercourse during his recent visit to London. "Methinks," writes Sir James Williams, "I hear some of your literary friends say,—What arrogance, for one who is a mere *trammel of trade*, to compare himself with *us!* But when I reflect on your engagement to seek earnestly the Lord on your return, I confess Christian love is much concerned to know of your improvement: 't is not literature will do for a death-bed. Faith in Christ, as evidenced by a thorough change in life—a determination to be the Lord's always—then shall your peace flow as a river," &c.

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* "Arthur's Seat; the hill which overhangs Edinburgh."

# CHAP. XXXIV.

## 1809.

THE SLAVE TRADE.—EARLY MOVEMENTS ON THE SUBJECT.—DISUSE OF SUGAR.—PROGRESS OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ABOLITIONISTS.—MONTGOMERY'S OPINIONS.—PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS.—ABOLITION OF THE BRITISH SLAVE TRADE.—CELEBRATIONS OF THE EVENT.—BOWYER'S PROJECT.—POEM OF THE "WEST INDIES."—ITS CHARACTER AND SUCCESS.—MUNGO PARK.—WILBERFORCE AND LAS CASAS.—COWPER.

We have hardly alluded to the Slave Trade, a subject which had for years occupied the attention of Parliament, and denunciations of which frequently marked the lucubrations of the editor of the "Iris," who, from the first, entered with his whole heart and soul into the designs of those benevolent individuals, who at this time and long afterwards, were known as "abolitionists." An abhorrence of the principles and practice of the horrid traffic in human beings seems to have been imbibed by Montgomery almost with his mother's milk; nor is it surprising that the first exercises of his reason should have been associated with those ideas of wrong and suffering incident to a state of slavery, which the regular reports of the Brethren's Missionaries in the West Indies would naturally excite at the home settlements of the Moravians — especially as his own parents were, at the same time, devoting their energies and, as we have seen, sacrificing their lives for the

instruction of those poor African outcasts from hope and humanity.

It may be mentioned too, that, on his first arrival at Sheffield in 1792, he found the family of Mr. Gales devoted to the anti-slavery cause; the use of sugar having been abandoned by them, as by many others*, at that period. The effects of the charge of Jacobinism made against the earlier friends of abolition was considerably neutralised in Sheffield by the fact that the Rev. James Wilkinson, then vicar, and other influential individuals of the Tory party, held a meeting and passed resolutions in favour of the movement of Clarkson and his coadjutors. The earliest evidence of Montgomery's opinions on the slave trade exists in the form of a sonnet, published in Gales' paper, in which he asks ironically, whether it was likely that the Maker of man would "cram a soul" into such "a black hole" as the body of a negro? with some other expressions of the like kind, which are more remarkable for strength than delicacy.

The earliest public agitation of the question had, however, commenced long before Montgomery was enabled either by years or station to take either thought or part in it. Indeed, by a somewhat remarkable coincidence, the date of his birth, in 1771, and the memorable trial of the case of Somerset, the negro, by the issue of which the courts of law decided, or rather reaffirmed the important principle, that "slaves cannot breathe in England," were exactly synchronous. It

* Not fewer, indeed, than 300,000 persons, according to Clarkson. As early as 1789, William Allen, the well known Quaker philanthropist, resolved, "through divine assistance, to persevere in the disuse of sugar, until the slave trade should be abolished:" a resolution to which he stedfastly adhered for upwards of forty-three years, until the Abolition Bill passed, when he resumed the use of it.—*Allen's Life*, vol. i. p. 7.

may be worth while here to mention, that the well-known and oft-quoted sentiment of Cowper was recognised almost in the very words of the poet, even during the prevalence of Star-Chamber law in this country; for Rushworth* expressly says that, in the eleventh of Queen Elizabeth, a person who had bought and wished to scourge a slave was called to account, it being resolved by authority, "that England was too pure air for slaves to breathe in." The history of the abolition of the African Slave Trade by the British Legislature need not be epitomised in these pages; but the work of Clarkson on that subject, and still more the personal labours of that indefatigable philanthropist, ought not to be passed over in silence. Speaking of the trying fluctuations to which this cause of humanity was subject in an early period of its progress, the historian says:—

"In the year 1787, the members of the House of Commons, as well as the people, were enthusiastic in behalf of the Abolition of the Trade. In the year 1788, the fair enthusiasm of the former began to fade. In 1789 it died. In 1790 prejudice started up, as a noxious weed, in its place. In 1791, this prejudice arrived at its full growth. These changes were owing to delay, during which the mind, having been gradually led to the question as a commercial, had been gradually taken from it as a moral object."†

Referring to the rejection of a "Bill for the *Gradual Abolition of Negro Slavery*," by the House of Commons, a few years earlier than this date, Montgomery says:—

"There is *a fashion in feeling*. This infamous traffic in the unmarketable commodity of God's creatures — for the

* Rush. Hist. Collec. vol. ii. p. 468.

† Clarkson's Hist. Abolition, vol. ii. p. 347.

Almighty never alienated a tittle of his right in a single human being — and who shall dare to dispossess him of it? — we say this infamous traffic, which once excited almost universal and unqualified abhorrence in this country, seems now to have softened into a common-place subject, which we can contemplate with as much composure as the diviners of old could pore over the palpitating entrails of animals ripped open to discover the secrets of futurity. The plagues of Egypt were the first signal and exemplary punishment inflicted by the violated Majesty of Heaven on slave traders in the infancy of the world. The plagues of St. Domingo are only the beginning of sorrows in the West Indies, — that grave of Europe and Africa! — where slaves and their tyrants indiscriminately, rapidly, and prematurely descend to the dust;—where the snow of age is almost as rarely seen on the head of man as the snow of winter on the tops of the mountains."

Sympathy for the enslaved and distressed Africans, however it might be entertained by many persons only as *a fashionable feeling*, was, in Montgomery, a deeply rooted principle, which would not allow him either to remain silent or to relax his exertions in this great cause of suffering humanity.

"We strongly recommend," says he ('Iris,' Sep. 25. 1805), "the perusal of an article in our last page on the Slave Trade. The atrocities there recorded are not the ghosts of antiquated murders, that have mouldered out of remembrance. This blood that cries for vengeance has not lost its voice,—it has not lost its warmth! It boils round the heart, it burns through the veins, while the reader alternately trembles with anger and melts with compassion at the crimes and the woes of his fellow creatures. Fellow creatures! Are slaves and slave-dealers our fellow-creatures? To what wickedness — to what misery are we akin! No: — the sufferer is only our brother; his lordly oppressor denies consanguinity with the slave; be it so, for thereby he bastardises himself; the negro is assuredly related to *all the rest* of the human race!"

We need not attempt to trace with anything like minuteness of detail, the resumption and termination, in the Parliament of Great Britain, of the great struggle between the advocates of the slave trade on one side, and the abolitionists on the other; it is sufficient here to record that on the 25th of March, 1807, the Royal Assent was given to the memorable act which had been passed by the Legislature for abolishing British traffic in human beings, thereby recognising the negro as a fellow-creature, and wiping from our national character the foulest blot that ever disgraced the natural, civil, or religious condition of any country. But we must allow Montgomery to hail this triumph in his own words:—

"At length," says he ('Iris,' March 31. 1807) "the Slave Trade is to be abolished both in England and America. In this country the Bill has received the Royal Assent. Thus hath the glorious offspring of humanity, which for seventeen years has been passing through a 'burning fiery furnace,' heated into sevenfold fury by the worshippers of the 'golden image,' set up by a greater than Nebuchadnezzar—by 'Mammon' in the West Indies; — thus, we say, has this persecuted child of benevolence come out perfect and pure from the fire; for the angel of mercy, who was seen walking with it in the flames, prevented them from kindling upon it; and in Heaven's own appointed time, He has brought it forth unconsumed and uninjured, untainted and untouched."

It was now that the arts of poetry, painting, and sculpture, which had so often been exerted to draw attention to the subject during the struggle, were to be employed in commemorating the victory. In the spring of 1807, while suffering under despondency, from various causes already mentioned, Montgomery, to use his own words,—

"Received a letter from Mr. Bowyer, of Pall-Mall (to whom I was an entire stranger), announcing that he had projected a splendid memorial of the recent triumph of justice and humanity, in the abolition of the Slave Trade by an Act of the British Legislature — in a series of pictures, representing the past sufferings and the anticipated blessings of the long-wronged and late-righted Africans, both in their own land and in the West Indies. The engravings from these designs were to be accompanied by a poem illustrative of the subject. This he very courteously requested me to contribute. Soon elated, as soon depressed, I eagerly, yet tremblingly, undertook the commission; for I could not help doubting the wisdom of Mr. Bowyer's choice of a poet after the judgment which had been passed upon my recent performances by the critical infallibilities of my own country." [And this consideration the ingenuous poet urged upon Bowyer by letter.] "But," he proceeds, "the prize held out was worth an effort at any peril to my doubtful reputation, especially as the condemned volume had been more graciously treated by the censors of literature in the land which had adopted me from my childhood than in that which had given me birth. Wherefore, having, ever since I penned a paragraph, either in verse or prose, for a newspaper, availed myself of every fair opportunity to expose the iniquities of the Slave Trade and Slavery, I gave my whole mind to the theme. It haunted me day and night, in the house and in the field, alone or in company; however engaged in business, in conversation, or in amusement, the process of thought and of composition was continually in exercise, and under all these different situations and incompatible circumstances, portions of the poem were either suggested, elaborated, or suddenly, not to say spontaneously, produced."

Such is the author's own account of the origin and progress of the poem of the "West Indies," as given in the preface.

We believe the application to Montgomery was made

at the instance of Dr. Waugh, a respectable Independent minister in London, seconded by Dr. Aikin; to the latter gentleman, as well as to his friend Parken, the poet transmitted portions of his work, as written in 1807, and previously to their being placed in the hands of the designer.

*James Montgomery to Joseph Aston.*

"Sheffield, March 6. 1809.

"My dear Friend,

"I must not write a long letter, because it is newspaper-eve, and I am wearied with facts and rumours, and political and moral speculations on the signs of the times, which to my mind are so very portentous, that I can neither write with temper nor safety upon them. The moment I take up my pen, it kindles between my fingers, and I seem to write in fire that alarms me when I read it afterwards, and makes my thoughts once more familiar with prison scenes,—vice, misfortune, poverty, profligacy, villainy and folly, all immured together, and all contaminating, or contaminated by each other. O my very heart turns sick with horror, when I imagine the *possibility* — the *probability*, considering my fanatic zeal in the most righteous cause under heaven—of my being again buried alive for months, perhaps for years, bankrupt in circumstances, forgotten by the world, neglected by my friends, in the solitude — or, worse than the solitude, in the society—of a gaol! And for what? For truth, for justice, for liberty, which ought to be more precious to me in principle than freedom of person, or life itself; but for which I am not surely called by Heaven to suffer voluntary martyrdom, without profit either to myself or my countrymen. I strive, therefore, with all my might to restrain my fury for mending mankind by ruining myself, when I write for my newspaper, which makes it in general a very dull, equivocal thing, rather tolerated than admired or approved. Now and then, when I put forth my strength, and strike a blow at some conspicuous mark, I make a little motion among my brethren, and they copy my paragraphs from paper to paper, some with abuse, and some with com-

mendation. This was the case a few weeks ago, when I ventured to censure the profligate connection between the D. of Y. and Mrs. C. In truth, my paragraph made such a noise, like the reverberated report of a pistol in the caverns of the Peak, at once multiplying and magnifying the sound, that I was terrified at it in the end, and expected nothing less than an information *ex officio*, by the attorney-general. However, as my attack was solely upon the immorality of the adulterous intercourse, my mind was made up to live or die by what I had said, without retracting or qualifying a syllable of it. This squall of alarm is now blown over: how soon another may spring up, and overset me, I know not. . . . . Concerning my Slave Trade poem, I have only to tell you, that I heard a few days ago from Bowyer, who complains bitterly of ungrateful and mercenary engravers, who have both his plates and him in their hands, and he can neither extricate the one nor the other: so that his work may be three months — or, if you like a round number better, six months—before it makes its appearance. This is very distressing to a poet, impatient to be born in a new shape; for if a poet lives in his works when he is dead, he lives much more in them while he is alive: in fact, he undergoes a regular metempsychosis from one form to another, through every piece that he writes; the last being always the best in his esteem, as each body which the soul inhabits in the course of transmigration, whether it be an elephant or an ass, is in turn the dearest. . . . . Of my visit to London I have talked and written so much that I am quite weary of it; and if I were to attempt to entertain you with any account of it, I should be too dull to be endured. I saw Dr. Aikin, Mrs. Barbauld, Robert Bloomfield, and ought to have seen Thomas Campbell, but illness prevented him from meeting me according to the invitation of a common friend, and he sent an apology as flattering, but not half so welcome, as his company would have been. I was introduced to so many other great and middling, and good and better sort of men, that I cannot now recollect half of those I saw, and of those that saw me, not the thousandth part,—for in London one seems to live in the

mouth of a bee-hive, where those that are crowding in and those that are pressing out pass over or under one another, on this side or that, just as there may be room or opportunity. . . . . This is London !

" I am your sincere friend,

" J. MONTGOMERY.

" Mr. Joseph Aston, Manchester."

The " West Indies" lost nothing by the ordeal of friendly criticism previous to publication, little as the poet was disposed hastily to alter what he had deliberately written. We recollect the seasonable caution which Dr. Aikin gave, after a perusal of the second part, viz., of the danger of allowing the exuberance of tropical scenery to lead to a lavish style of description incompatible with that simplicity which is favourable to a just interest in the subject. Of course, the Doctor did not, he said, wish his friend to lower his rich diction down to the standard of a school " vult videri pauper et est pauper," but merely to remember that as flatness is the fault allied to simplicity, so turgidity closely borders on elevation,—judicious hints not neglected by him to whom they were given. The worthy Doctor not only shared with his intelligent family circle in the perusal and criticism of the poem while in manuscript, but he kindly offered to read " the proofs" from the press,—a pecuniary as well as a literary convenience, which provincial authors, printing and publishing in London only since the era of *penny postage*, can scarcely appreciate.

The delays from various causes which protracted the execution of Bowyer's spirited design over two years, had apparently nearly defeated it; for so late as March 30th, Dr. Aikin, writing to Montgomery, says, " I have had no proofs from Bensley since I last wrote; so that I suspect Bowyer's publication is really suspended,"—

Grahame having previously threatened that if the volume did not make its appearance in six weeks, he would publish his own poems at once.

Although Montgomery was not at first informed that it was intended to publish any other works in connection with his own, on the subject proposed, he soon learned that Bowyer was in treaty with several other poets.* None of these, however, ultimately came into the arrangement, with the exception of Miss Elizabeth Ogilvy Benger and the Rev. James Grahame, whose poems, along with the "West Indies," appeared in the spring of this year in a five guinea quarto volume, beautifully printed by Bensley, and illustrated with engravings by Raimbach, Scriven, and Worthington, from designs by Smirke, and wax medallions by Miss Andras.

It is said that the spirited projector of this appropriate commemoration of a noble act of British humanity did not spend less than between three and four thousand pounds in the undertaking. But although the work was brought out in the first style of typographical and decorative elegance, it was only comparatively successful; the price, the delay, and the defection of some of the allied poets, having in turn acted unfavourably.

* The prospect of having the author of the "Pleasures of Hope" for a colleague in the projected work, is thus alluded to in a letter to Parken: — "It is exceedingly consoling to me to learn that Campbell was charmed with the offer of Mr. Bowyer, and told him that I had been very ill-used by the Edinburgh Reviewers. Poets are so jealous of each other, and there was so villanous a trap laid by the 'Ed. Rev.,' to catch my contemporaries and flatter them into enemies, whether they were such or not, that I am almost as much surprised as delighted with Campbell's generosity, particularly as he is an utter stranger to me, and I am perhaps the most ardent admirer he has in the world."

Montgomery's poem was subsequently made up with all the plates, and published separately—a distinction which it well merited. The author received for this edition one hundred guineas, besides several copies of the work.

As Bowyer's splendid volume was neither advertised in the usual manner, nor the price of Montgomery's portion of it within the means of ordinary purchasers, it was not until reprinted in a less expensive and more convenient form, and accompanied by about twenty occasional poems, that the "West Indies" became universally known and appreciated. In this form, upwards of ten thousand copies of the work were sold in ten years, and the author's reputation became established wherever the language of his country was heard.

The poem of the "West Indies," like the "Wanderer of Switzerland," owed its immediate success, in no small degree, to the fact of its embodying a class of sentiments which were universally prevalent among philanthropists at the time when the work appeared. It is scarcely less remarkable for a certain tone of earnestness and vehemence pervading many passages; and which, as a friendly critic told the poet, "give to the versification something of the character of loud speaking." In several respects it was far more lucky than its predecessor. It not only became immediately and generally popular, but the critics appeared to concur with the public in general approval: even the "Edinburgh Review" was silent. Apart from the fact that it embodied a universal sympathy with the great national act which it commemorated, the topics and style of the verse were of such a nature as to make almost every couplet suitable for quotation by speakers or writers on the evils or the abolition of slavery; and

perhaps it would hardly be too much to affirm that there is not a single clause in any one of the four parts of this poem, that has not been cited, wholly or in part, from the press, the platform, or the pulpit, during "the height of that great argument" which subsequently ensued, and led to the abolition of slavery itself, and the leading features of which were so admirably developed by the poet. Some passages there are, which, while they are not restricted in their bearing to time or place, nor to the circumstances of any special condition of society, are at once so exquisitely true to nature, and so poetically perfect in design, that the humblest as well as the most intelligent reader of the "West Indies," alike comprehends and admires them. Need we specify as an example the well-known lines, showing how the love of country and of home is the same in all ages and among all nations?—

"There is a land, of every land the pride," &c.

The beautiful thought which occurs in Part II., where the poet speaks of Africa as —

"A world of wonders, where creation seems
No more the work of Nature, but her dreams,"

appears almost identical with one conceived some years before, on the "Heights of Abraham," at Matlock. Viewing the romantic scenery from this spot with great advantage, in the company of his friend Mr. Rhodes *, he produced, impromptu, the following lines, which he wrote with his pencil in the alcove: —

"Here, in wild pomp, magnificently bleak,
Stupendous Matlock towers amid the Peak;

* Author of "Peak Scenery."

Here, rocks on rocks — on forests, forests rise,
Spurn the low earth, and mingle with the skies!
Great Nature slumbering by fair Derwent's stream,
Conceived these giant mountains in a dream."

A curious verbal solecism passed through three editions before it was detected by the author —

"The sire, the son, the husband, *father*, friend;"

whereas the word ought to have been *brother*, as it now stands.

In Part III. occurs the episodical allusion to Mungo Park, in an ingenious adaptation of the negro daughter's song of the "Poor White Man," whose ultimate return, after repeatedly encountering the perils of exploratory travel in the wilds of Africa, was then anticipated — alas, in vain! Among others to whom Montgomery had sent specimens of the "West Indies," during the progress of composition, was his friend Standert of Taunton, who thus acknowledged the compliment: —

"It is not a little curious that the specimen of your poem, with which you have favoured me, should allude to Mungo Park. Mungo Park was my friend; I knew him intimately — and only knew him to esteem him: a man of greater integrity, simplicity, and intrepidity never breathed. Our acquaintance commenced in a singular manner, — I *discovered him*. One morning, previous to a lecture, which I was in the habit of delivering at the Westminster Hospital, I saw a stranger loitering in the surgery, whose appearance was perfectly distinct from that of the general class of medical students. He seemed particularly modest and reserved. As he walked across the room, I observed something peculiar in his step, and at the same instant it occurred to me that he was very like the portrait of Mungo Park affixed to the 'Travels in Africa.' The stranger had

only crossed the room to look at a map hanging on the wall; — and as soon as he placed his finger upon Africa, his identity was past doubt. I instantly addressed him; and from that moment we were friends. What may have been his fate is unknown; it will certainly not be my lot to discover him a second time on the banks of the Niger, or to deliver him from a second Moorish captivity — though this was once my dream! Now then for the poetry."

And the passage in question touched a nearer string — for Mrs. Montague tells the poet that when she read it to Mungo Park's brother, "he was exceedingly affected."

In this part of the poem we meet with a word, the merit of having first introduced which from the German, it has been thought worth while to claim for Lord Byron, and others*: it is, however, more than probable that its earliest transplantation into our language was by Montgomery, in the following line,—

> "To fly for ever from the creole strand,
> And dwell a freeman in his FATHERLAND."

Nor was the word an accidental compound, which has become interesting merely through a lucky coincidence; for we happen to know that its use in the text was suggested to the poet by the emphatic tone in which he had heard his friend Henry Steinhauer speak of *his* Vaterland.

There is one passage in the "West Indies," Part IV., in which an equivocal compliment is undesignedly paid to the great parliamentary leader in the anti-

* D'Israeli claims the credit of having introduced the word "Fatherland," into our literature.—*Athenæum*, Aug. 22. 1846.

slavery cause: we allude to the couplet in which the poet calls

> "——Wilberforce, the messenger of grace,
> The new Las Casas of a ruined race."

*Holland:* "I wish, sir, you had not, in the fourth canto of the 'West Indies,' coupled the name of Wilberforce with that of Las Casas, as the historical evidence hardly sustains the claims of the Spanish licentiate to be regarded as the archetype of the English philanthropist." *Montgomery:* "The character of Las Casas has been grossly misunderstood, in consequence of what Dr. Robertson has said of him: the fact is, he was *not* a promoter of slavery, as the historian alleges; much less was he the originator of the system, as some persons have asserted: on the other hand, he appears to have been the avowed friend of the negroes, at a time when no doubt existed as to the abstract propriety of dealing in slaves." *Holland:* "And exactly such was the character, really or ostensibly, of most of the persons in this country, who differed so much from the Abolitionists at the commencement of their career. I am sure you will agree with me that many of those persons, in the British Parliament and out of it, who at first were rather anxious to mitigate, as they vainly hoped to have done, the evils of slavery, than willing at once to abolish the slave trade, were neither destitute of intelligence, humanity, nor religion: but they deserve none of the praise of those who achieved the glorious triumph of 1807." *Montgomery:* "You will perceive in all the later editions of the 'West Indies,' a long note, in which I have summed up the evidence for and against Las Casas; and I am convinced that the Abbé Grégoire (whose work, in French, was translated and published in this country

by Henry Redhead Yorke) has completely exculpated the great and good man whose name I have coupled with that of Wilberforce, from the degrading imputations brought against him by Herrera and Robertson." *Holland:* "I have carefully read the note, as you may believe; but to whatever extent it may extricate the character of Las Casas from the imputations and mistakes of historians, it still, in my humble judgment, falls as far short of justifying his claim to be coupled with Wilberforce in your poetical compliment, as it fails to afford any evidence whatever, that he either sought or desired the abolition of the slave trade, however anxious he may have been to mitigate the sufferings of its victims." *

* Very early in the history of this abominable traffic—viz., 1511—Ferdinand the Fifth, King of Spain, permitted great numbers of slaves to be carried from Africa into the Spanish colonies in America. After his death, a proposal was made by Las Casas, Bishop of Chiapa, to Cardinal Ximenes, who held the reins of the government of Spain, till Charles the Fifth came to the throne, "for the establishment of a regular system of commerce in the persons of the native Africans." These are the words of Thomas Clarkson, who, however, immediately adds, "The object of Bartholomew de las Casas was undoubtedly to save the American Indians, whose cruel treatment and almost extirpation he had witnessed during his residence among them, and in whose behalf he had undertaken a voyage to the court of Spain." Still, as he acknowledges, "It is difficult to reconcile this proposal with the humane and charitable spirit of the Bishop of Chiapa." A similar difficulty on the same grounds often occurred to the abolitionists of Montgomery's times. There is no "difficulty" in reconciling the sentiments and the office of Cardinal Ximenes, to the honour of whose memory it is recorded, that "he refused the proposal" of Las Casas, "not only judging it to be unlawful to consign innocent people to slavery at all, but to be very inconsistent to deliver the inhabitants of one country from a state of misery by consigning it to those of another."—*History of the Abolition of the African Slave Trade*, vol. i. p. 34.

It is not surprising that Montgomery should have cherished an ardent respect for the memory and worth of Cowper, the charms of whose verse had been devoted with success* to that cause of humanity, the triumphs of which he did not live to witness. With Cowper, also, the Moravian bishop who resided at Fulneck was personally acquainted; and Montgomery was in the habit, during his residence there, of hearing the name, and even, as we have seen, reading the works of a poet who had devoted his talents to the service of Christianity —who had applauded Missionary labours in general, and the exertions of the Brethren in particular†, and that too at a period when it was not common to avow such sentiments, especially in poetry. The luminary of Weston was setting behind darker clouds than those of death, when the star of Montgomery's genius was emerging from the quiet shades of Fulneck; but it was gratifying to every reader of the "West Indies" to discover upon whom the mantle of the elder bard had fallen, in the following tender apostrophe: —

"Lamented Cowper! in thy path I tread;
O that on me were thy meek spirit shed!
The woes that wring my bosom once were thine;
Be all thy virtues, all thy genius mine!
Peace to thy soul! thy God my portion be;
And in his presence may I rest with thee!" ‡

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* Clarkson's Hist. Abolition of the African Slave Trade.

† ——— "See Germany send forth
Her sons to pour it (Gospel Hope) on the farthest north.
Fired with a zeal peculiar, *they* defy
The rage and rigour of a polar sky,
And plant successfully sweet Sharon's rose,
In icy plains and in eternal snows."—*Hope.*

‡ The wrongs and the sufferings of the expatriated Africans had often been incidentally alluded to by English poets, including

Pope, Thomson, Savage, Shenstone, and especially Cowper. Perhaps the first poem which was written, expressly on the subject, was Day's "Dying Negro," published in 1773: this was followed by Roscoe's "Wrongs of Africa," in 1787. Cowper's "Task" appeared in 1785. In 1791, Mrs. Barbauld addressed to Wilberforce a poetical epistle in favour of what Madame D'Arblay calls "The *Demolition* of the Slave Trade." "Quashy, or the Coal Black Maid," of Captain Morris, was published in 1796. The scene is laid in the island of Martinico, where, as in the rest of the French colonies, the revolutionary government had abolished slavery.

## CHAP. XXXV.

### 1809.

REVIEW OF CRABBE'S "POEMS."—CAMPBELL'S "GERTRUDE OF WYOMING."—BURNS' "RELIQUES."—WORDSWORTH'S POLITICAL PAMPHLET.—CORRESPONDENCE WITH MR. ROSCOE.—THE DUKE OF YORK.—SIR JOHN MOORE.—DEATH OF THOMAS GALES.—LANCASTERIAN SCHOOL.—WRITING IN SUNDAY SCHOOLS.—THE JUBILEE.

We have before us eight letters of Parken's, dated in 1809; but not one of Montgomery's in reply. He continued, however, his services to the "Eclectic," having reviewed this year Crabbe's "Poems," * Campbell's "Gertrude of Wyoming," † Burns' "Reliques," ‡ and a prose pamphlet of Wordsworth's. § "Crabbe," he says, "is a poet half-way between Pope and Goldsmith; but he wants the taste of the one, and the tenderness of the other: we are often reminded of each, yet he never seems the servile imitator of either; while his style and his subjects, especially in facetious description, occasionally elevate him to an equality with both."

The sweet poem of "Gertrude" is composed in the Spenserian stanza, no example of which, so far as we recollect, exists in the entire mass of Montgomery's

* Eclectic Review, vol. v. p. 40.
† Ibid. p. 519.; vi. p. 718.
‡ Ibid. vol. v. p. 393.
§ Ibid. p. 744.

published poetry. He considers it to be "a most compact and perfect but almost unmanageable stanza, in the present scarcity of rhymes, when poets have neither the power that Spenser exercised of compelling his terminations to tally by arbitrary transpositions and inflections, nor the privilege, which even Pope and Gray in the last century enjoyed, of alloying their purer rhymes with flat and discordant sounds."* Byron, presently afterwards, not only gallantly defied, but nobly overleapt, these structural difficulties. Towards the conclusion of this admirable review of Campbell, we meet with a sentiment, the truth of which must have been felt by almost every reader of Montgomery's works: — "A poet who has genius enough to awaken curiosity concerning himself, never charms his readers more than when he incidentally and unexpectedly affords them a glimpse of some circumstances connected with his personal history." Coleridge entertained a similar opinion: — "If I could judge of others by myself," said he, "I should not hesitate to affirm, that the most interesting passages in our most interesting poems are those in which the author develops his own feelings."†

Montgomery's review of Burns is one of his most elaborate compositions in this class, in none of which has the writer shown a more nice discrimination of in-

* A more important question than the metrical structure of the poem afterwards came to be discussed, — namely, the moral injustice alleged to have been done by the poet to one of the personages in the story. In the "New Monthly Magazine" for February, 1822, is a letter from Mr. Campbell, in which he acknowledges himself to have been misled relative to the character of the Indian chief, and the atrocities charged upon him at Wyoming. These retractations were the result of evidence exhibited to the poet by the son of that chief, John Brant, a spirited young Mohawk Indian, who was in London in 1822.

† Gilman's "Coleridge," vol. i. p. 98.

dividual character, or a more thorough insight into the practical influence of *principle* on the human heart. He remarked to us that this article was written with the deepest interest in the feelings and the fate of him who was the subject of it: and no wonder, — for he had himself, in early life, experienced his share of that undue mental excitement, and those peculiar temptations, which too often attend "the temperament of genius," and which were, in so large a measure, the fatal heritage of his highly-gifted fellow-countryman! Experience evidently guided the pen in the initial paragraph of this review.—

"In youth, when we first become enamoured of the works of the great poets, we naturally imagine that those must themselves be the happiest of men, who can communicate such unknown and unimagined emotions of pleasure as seem at once to create and to gratify a new sense within us, while by the magic of undefinable art they render the loveliest scenes of nature yet more lovely, make the most indifferent things interesting, and from sorrow itself awaken a sympathy of joy, unutterably sublime and soothing. He who in his early years has never been so smitten by the love of song as to have wished, nay, even *dreamed*, himself a poet (as Hesiod is said to have done, though few like Hesiod, *awaking*, have found their dreams fulfilled), is a stranger to one of the purest, noblest, and most enduring sources of earthly enjoyment."

The strain is pursued in terms not less striking, or less sadly true: —

"When, however, glowing with enthusiastic admiration, we turn from the *works* to the *lives* of these exalted beings, we find that they were not only liable to the same infirmities with ourselves, but that, with respect to many of them, those vehement passions which they could kindle and quell at pleasure in the bosoms of others ruled and raged with ungovernable fury in their own, hurrying them, amidst

alternate penury and profusion, honour and abasement, through the changes of a miserable life, to a deplorable and sometimes a desperate death; while among the more amiable of this ill-starred race, those finer sensibilities, that warm the hearts' blood of their readers with ineffable delight, were to the possessors slow and fatal fires feeding upon their vitals, while they languished in solitude and sunk in obscurity to the grave, after bequeathing to posterity an inheritance, in the unrewarded productions of their genius, that should last through many generations, and cast at once a lustre and a shade on the age in which they *flourished*, as the phrase is,—in which they *perished*, as it ought to be. . . . . The genius of Burns resembled the pearl of Cleopatra, both in its worth and in its fortune; the one was moulded in secret by nature in the depths of the ocean, the other was produced and perfected by the same hand in equal obscurity on the banks of the Ayr; the former was suddenly brought to light, and shone for a season with attractive splendour on the forehead of beauty; the latter not less unexpectedly emerged from the shades, and dazzled and delighted an admiring nation; the fate of both was the same; each was wantonly dissolved in the cup of pleasure, and quaffed by its possessor at one intemperate draught."

The production of Wordsworth, already alluded to, was a political pamphlet, the title of which, as Montgomery said, reads like a literal translation from the Latin*, and the contents of which exhibit a still more peculiar *English* style.

"Of the latter," the reviewer says, "it is so exquisitely compounded of words, idioms, and phrases, obsolete and

* "Concerning the Relations of Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal, to each other, and the Common Enemy, at this Crisis; and specifically as affected by the Convention of Cintra; the whole brought to the Test of those Principles by which alone the Independence of Nations can be Preserved or Recovered."

authorised, unprecedented and vernacular, as to form altogether a style of a very peculiar gait and character, resembling nothing so nearly as the blank verse of the Westmoreland triumvirate of bards; who, if they have sometimes condescended to degrade poetry into prose, have occasionally deigned to exalt prose into poetry. Of this, the tract before us is an illustrious example. In these Sybilline leaves (full of portentous and useful denunciations), snatched from the winds and stitched loosely together to make a pamphlet of only one day's longer life than a newspaper, there is more of the spirit and fire of genuine poetry than we have found in many a cream-coloured volume of verse, designed to delight and astonish posterity. The language is at once splendid and obscure, vigorous, yet polite, beautiful, bewildering, and uncouth. The sentiments, ardent, free, and original, are frequently so clouded with mysticism, subtilised by metaphysical refinement, or emblazoned with imagination, that they appear either too dark, too thin, or too bright, to be steadily viewed or clearly comprehended. But there is a pulse of philanthropy that beats through every page (though not through every line), and a soul of patriotism that breathes through the whole body of the work, which raise it, as an offspring of intellect, far above the political ephemera quickened from the carcases of transient events which Time leaves behind him in his devastating march to eternity,—ephemera which flutter for a day, then vanish for ever. Among this imbecile and fugitive race, the present gorgeous emanation of genius is born; and with them it must perish."

The pamphlet *has* perished as predicted; but it seemed due to the generous tone with which the Sheffield poet-politician hailed the patriotic Laker in this instance, to snatch from immediate oblivion this brief memento of a very seasonable and clever production.

The correspondence between Montgomery and Mr. Roscoe commenced with the following letter, written by the former in behalf of his friend Henry Steinhauer,

who was anxious to make a somewhat leisurely survey of the treasures of the Liverpool Botanical Garden: —

*James Montgomery to William Roscoe.*

"Sheffield, June 18. 1808.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have no right to intrude myself upon your attention, and I never should have done so, for my own sake; but I am emboldened by what I have heard of your general character—and, I will venture to add, by what I have heard of your kind disposition towards me, as the author of some small poems, which you have not been ashamed to commend—to introduce my friend, the Rev. Henry Steinhauer, to you, as a true lover of botany; with the request that you will favour him with the means and opportunity, while he is in Liverpool, of visiting the botanical garden there. I should not have presumed to ask this obligation either for myself or for him, notwithstanding what I have intimated above, had he not informed me that *you* are a botanist; and as such, I am sure that it will be a gratification to yourself to serve an ingenious and amiable young man, on an occasion which he deems so precious, that he is willing to do violence to his own modest nature, in becoming the bearer of this letter, that he may avail himself of it to improve and enlarge his acquaintance with the most lovely and innocent inhabitants of the earth—the flowers of all the fields beneath the sun. I am afraid of being misunderstood: a man of your eminence is exposed to have his peace broken in upon by many impertinent visitors, who come from idle curiosity to see—or, rather, from vanity, to say that they have seen—one of the great lights of the age, and who will be a light to posterity also. Whatever may be the curiosity or the vanity of my botanical friend, neither the one nor the other could have induced him to interrupt you for a moment in your studies or your repose. He does not come to hang himself upon you, but to solicit a kindness which he trusts you can easily confer, and which will exceedingly oblige him,—a

recommendation to the steward of the garden, by which he may gain permission leisurely to survey it. I will not trouble you with another word: if I have imperfectly explained his wish, he must explain it better himself. He lives at Fulneck, near Leeds, and I enclose this letter to him by post. I should think that I was dishonouring rather than complimenting you, if I were to offer any further apology for thus frankly asking a favour of you, to whom I am personally a stranger. Accept this letter (as it is sincerely intended to be) as a proof that I am grateful for the delicate but inestimable services which you have rendered to me and to my poetry by condescending to interest yourself for either. That you may not suspect that I address you from mere presumption of your goodwill towards me, I beg leave to say that Dr. Aikin, Mr. Cromek, and some others have occasionally intimated to me that you were disposed to think well of my rhymes. I will only add, that by this letter it is neither my design nor my desire to inveigle you into correspondence with myself. If it serves my friend Steinhauer in the way which he anticipates, my sole end in writing it will be answered.

"I am, very respectfully,

"Your obliged and obedient servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Wm. Roscoe, Esq., Allerton Hall, near Liverpool."

Roscoe, bound as he was to his desk, like his correspondent, by the triple chain of literature, politics, and private business, was not the man to allow a letter from Montgomery to remain on his file unacknowledged. In how cordial and unassuming a tone he welcomed the introduction of the diffident Sheffield poet, may be imagined from the following letter: —

*James Montgomery to William Roscoe.*

"Sheffield, Feb. 20. 1809.

"DEAR SIR,

"If respect made me answer your first letter with silence, the same feeling would have prompted me long

before now to acknowledge your second with the warmest and sincerest expressions of gratitude; but hitherto I have been prevented by a great deal of business, which was not my own, and a great deal of anxiety which I hope was entirely my own; for I am so jealous of that, that I would not, with my good will, let my greatest enemy share it with me. But on consulting the moon this evening (who is my chronologer in these matters), I find by the shape of her head—which is a Merlin's head to me—that if I let it grow a bit larger, without writing to you, though I have nothing in the world to say, but 'thank you' for your exceedingly kind and welcome letter of the 21st of January, I shall deserve never to hear again from you, except that you desire never to hear again from me.

"You know that it is not always exactly the opinion that a man holds of himself—though who else is likely to form a better, or half so good a one?—by which the world is bound to judge of him; nay, the world is so perverse and headstrong, that it will form its own opinions, right or wrong, concerning every man who by virtue or talents, or by the want of both (a much commoner case in these profligate days), makes himself conspicuous in it. Hence it by no means follows, that because you are not so high-minded as to think your 'good will worth solicitation,' *others* may not be of a very different sentiment, and a sentiment more justly and impartially formed from a fuller and fairer view of the subject; for every man is too near himself to see all his faults in their true proportion; and he ought to be too near his virtues also to see them in the light in which others should behold them. Many truths are almost paradoxes: we can scarcely think too humbly of those very things in ourselves, of which we scarcely can think too highly in others: does not your heart bear testimony with mine to this? If it does, we will defy all the heads under the sun to disprove it. Now to come directly to my point, after going quite round it, as a spaniel does before he lies down. I *did* think your good will so well worth solicitation, that though I seized the first opportunity to recommend myself

to it, in recommending my botanical friend Steinhauer, I valued it so highly, and was at the same time so afraid of cheapening myself—forgive my pride, which I may as well confess honestly, because you have found it out before now without confession—that I was determined, even if I never had another equally fair opportunity, to live for ever—that is my whole share of the threescore years and ten allotted to man in this world—a stranger to you, rather than on any occasion, when my appearance might be interpreted into intrusion, attract your notice by any art or littleness unworthy of us both. So much about next to nothing; however, I am not afraid of being thought impertinent now; we should have no letters worth reading if we were not allowed to write about anything or nothing. When I write again I may perhaps have something better to say, but that must be as it happens; I will not seek it, because, if I find it, I shall lose it in trying to secure it. I never was a hand at catching birds by throwing salt on their tails; and on that account, thinking with the proverb that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, I always let fly the thoughts that come first, not doubting that they will be the most acceptable, because they are the freest. I did not intend anything in this letter, except to thank you for your last favour, and to say this was not meant to drag another from you, but to assure you that till I hear from you again at your own impulse and convenience, I shall be your much obliged friend and servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"William Roscoe, Esq., Allerton Hall, near Liverpool."

Mr. Roscoe, writing to Montgomery, on the 25th of March, says:—

"There is a stupid old rule, that a man should not talk about himself; but I should be glad to know on what subject he can talk of which he ought to know so much; and I am sure that, whatever may be the case when he makes his appearance before the public, yet in the intercourse of private friendship the more he talks about himself the

better. On this account, I always prefer those letters of a friend which contain neither articles of intelligence nor abstract dissertations. The head speaketh to the head, and the heart to the heart; and I think it a sin to convert a letter into either a gazette or a sermon. Allow me, therefore, to say, that in you I have met with a correspondent according to my own mind, who writes as he thinks, and forgets, for a moment, that there are any other persons in the world besides his friend and himself. If, whenever you find yourself disposed towards it, you will take up your pen, and give your thoughts freely as they rise, you may rest assured that I shall not only receive them with real pleasure, but endeavour to make you the best return in my power."

The rest of the letter relates to the verses entitled the "Butterfly's Birthday," which accompanied it.

*James Montgomery to William Roscoe.*

"Sheffield, April 25. 1809.

"DEAR SIR,

"Though I am persuaded that a friendly correspondence carried on with mercantile punctuality would be the dullest drudgery on earth,—I mean if all men are made of the same thermometrical clay as I am, rising and falling, expanding and shrinking through every degree of heat and cold from the freezing to the boiling point, — yet there are some letters between friends, which, as they concern the business of friendship rather than its sympathies, ought to be answered as promptly as if they were a much inferior order of epistles than they really are; namely, as if they contained bills of lading or bank notes, which we poets, you know, do most magnanimously despise, and for our contempt of which we ourselves are held in equal contempt by those who know the value of such things. Your letter was of the description [of those] that from their nature, as well as their worth, claim immediate acknowledgment; and assuredly if I had only my common but legitimate excuse for neglecting to write, — hurry of business, low spirits, indolence, and other equally excellent and well-approved

apologies,—I should not have dared to have been silent so long, lest my silence should have been interpreted to mean the very reverse of all that I think and feel concerning your last letter and its enclosure. But indeed it found me under severe indisposition; and though it was like an 'angel visit' of a friend in spirit to one in sorrow and solitude, yet its cheering influence was soon past, and though I have often remembered it with gratitude and delight, this is truly the first hour since that I have had the fortitude to sit down to return you my thanks for your kindness and condescension. I am very slowly recovering from a shock of illness that brought me nearer to the grave, at least in my mind, than any that I ever experienced before. . . .

"With the verses I certainly was as much delighted as I was flattered by the mark of your confidence in entrusting them to me. The 'Butterfly's Ball' was one of those happy conceptions that in the golden moments of a poet's life — and few and precious are those moments — *come* unsolicited and unexpectedly into his mind, he knows not from whence, or by what association with his other ideas at the very time — was it not so? Whether it was or no (if it was not, you are the most enviable poet that ever lived to command such things at pleasure), it is one of those novel and fascinating productions of genius that instantaneously make an everlasting impression: that is, if I am not talking nonsense, they make the impression at the first reading, and that impression is indelible. This has been the case universally with the 'Butterfly's Ball;' the multitude of imitations that have been published prove its originality, and the eagerness with which these have been read, equally proves that the idea itself has most extraordinary power of pleasing. Wherein the secret of the charm consists I cannot tell; but I felt all its force and enchantment the first time I saw the piece; indeed, the moment I discovered the plan of the poem in the first stanza. You will not suspect me of gross adulation in speaking thus plainly in praise of a production of yours, because you will perceive that I regard it rather as a *felicity* than as a *merit* to have been its author. Now as I give you credit for

having conceived *that* poem by inspiration, or, if you please, by any other ineffable and involuntary impulse, the 'Butterfly's Birthday' is a poem of just the contrary description — a subject *sought* and *found* in that beautiful creation in the poet's mind, which is in reality a microcosm, a counterpart of the visible universe, in which there are mountains and forests, and rivers and seas, and men and animals, — nay, even sun, moon, and stars, — over which his genius exercises absolute dominion. Was it not in ranging through this world in imagination in search of a sequel to the 'Butterfly's Ball,' that you lighted upon a spot warm with vernal sunshine, and there witnessed the butterfly's birth, and instantly chose it to be the theme of another song? My theory may be wrong in both instances; and perhaps it is very impertinent in me thus to attempt to pierce into the secrets of your heart, which I am endeavouring to assimilate, in weakness and capriciousness, to my own. I shall, however, come to a point more to the purpose, if I venture to foretell that the success of the two poems will be exactly in the inverse ratio of their relative merits. I do not hesitate to say that I think the last a piece of much superior intrinsic worth, and I have as little doubt that the first has pleased ten times as many readers as you yourself expect to be struck and delighted with its successor — and for a very plain reason.—To enjoy and consequently to appreciate the 'Butterfly's Birthday' requires taste and intellect beyond the capacity of infancy and ignorance: whereas, I think it impossible for a human being, above the rank of an idiot, to hear the 'Butterfly's Ball' read over without being exceedingly amused with the grotesque yet exquisite pleasantry of the conceit — if you will allow me to use so base a word on so delicate a subject. . . . I presume, from the hand-writing, that the poem was copied by a very young lady — one, probably, of the merry party that danced at the butterfly's ball: may she have many frolics as innocent and cheerful!

"I am your obliged friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"William Roscoe, Esq., Allerton Hall, Liverpool."

The "Iris" of this year presents no peculiar feature. The editor's townspeople were generally suffering severely in consequence of the stagnation of trade, occasioned by the war. Indeed, to such an extent did the ordinary resources of the working classes fail in Sheffield, that the poor-rates were inadequate to the exigency, and in January a meeting of the inhabitants was held, at which upwards of thirteen hundred pounds was promptly subscribed; while the applicants for relief were upwards of ten thousand! Almost immediately, and for several months ensuing, the people were invited to forget — if they could — their sufferings, in the memorable investigation of Colonel Wardle's charges against the Duke of York. Montgomery reluctantly drew his pen in an affair that filled Europe with scandal; "the House of Commons," as he said, "being the only place in the kingdom, in which an Englishman can properly avow his convictions on this disgusting subject."

In recording the death of Sir John Moore at Corunna, he says: —

"It was the enviable reward of the commander to fall on the field of his triumph, to die at the brightest moment of his life. He was buried on the spot; the laurels which he plucked from the brow of death will spring up amid his ashes, and overshadow his grave, till the glory of heroes and the pride of ambition shall be for ever extinguished."

Thomas Gales, the father of the publisher of the "Sheffield Register," died on the 14th of October at Eckington, aged 75. Montgomery attended his funeral there, after which he composed the lines accompanying the following letter: —

*James Montgomery to Miss Sarah Gales.*

"Sheffield, Oct. 19. 1809.

"Dear Sarah,

"Being quite alone last night, while I smoked my

pipe, my meditations naturally turned on that affecting subject which has lately so much and so deeply occupied our hearts and our thoughts. I send you two copies of the fruits of my musings. The composition awakened and exercised the sharpest and the tenderest feelings of my breast, and though the perusal may make your wounds of sorrow bleed afresh, I trust the time will come when you can read even these humble lines with tranquil though mournful delight. Give one copy, with my kindest remembrance, to Eliza, and keep the other, if you please, for yourself. I have not copied the lines for your dear venerable mother, because you may either read them to her or not, now or at any future time, as you may think right. With most cordial sympathy of affection for you all, I remain your faithful friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Miss Sarah Gales, Eckington."

*"For the Widow and the Fatherless.*

"When those we love on earth are seen no more,
*We* mourn to think *that they are gone before;*
But if a pang amidst eternal rest
Could ever reach the bosoms of the Blest,
If Grief in Heaven could one weak moment find,
Would they not mourn *that we are left behind?* —
Our Friend is gone, our Father snatched away;
Through Death's dark night he passed to endless day:
With tears and sighs, in humble hope we gave
His dear, his sainted relics to the grave:
Yet from that grave we lift the weeping eye,
To hail his spirit beckoning from the sky;
We hear his voice — in tones divinely sweet,
He calls us home to our Redeemer's feet; —
We lived below, a family of love;
O may we be a family above!"

The celebrated Joseph Lancaster having visited Sheffield to explain his system of Education, the result was the establishment of a large school, towards which Mont-

gomery was not only an original subscriber, but in the management and success of which he ever took a lively interest.

Having occasion to refer to an advertisement in the "Iris," he said: —

"Some conscientious persons have objected to the instruction of the poor in *writing* at Sunday schools; but if teaching them to read be sanctifying the Sabbath of the Lord, teaching them to write must be conferring yet higher honour on that holy day, by making it doubly beneficial to them. Our Saviour, on the Sabbath day, not only opened the eyes of him that was born blind, but healed also the man that had the withered hand. Is not teaching the ignorant to read, giving sight to the blind eye? Is not teaching them to write, transfusing virtue through the withered hand?"

This provoked a letter of severe animadversions from an anonymous correspondent, which he published, with the remark "that our Saviour, both by precept and example, taught that '*it is* lawful *to do well*' on the Sabbath day; and as he has neither limited *the doing well* to acts of mercy or necessity, nor even to such as are otherwise connected with religious duties, it must be left to every man's conscience before God to determine for himself what it is '*to do well*' on the Sabbath day: but let not any one presume to lay a heavier yoke upon the necks of others than that which Christ himself had laid upon them." The seasonable expression of this sentiment directly contributed toward the immediate erection and extensive usefulness of one of the largest Sunday schools in Sheffield — Red Hill; in which we shall presently find the poet an active labourer.

The 25th of October witnessed the celebration of the Jubilee, in honour of the entrance of George the Third into the fiftieth year of his reign. The subject

appeared less to excite in Montgomery feelings of joy than to deepen the earnestness of his sigh for peace. "Could we," said he, "reach the royal ear, we would humbly represent to his Majesty that *one* word from him can make a *jubilee* in the nation, more illustrious than all that wealth and pomp can effect — who does not anticipate the word — PEACE?" Peace, however, was yet far off!

# CHAP. XXXVI.

## 1810.

NEWSPAPER WRITING.— THE "IRIS."— WARDLE AND BURDETT.— LETTERS TO AND FROM MR. ROSCOE
DEATH OF DR. BROWNE.
ROSCOE. — TO ROBERT MO
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cles at any season, now-a-days. After an apology for reminding his readers of so much of "*the commonplace of the season*," he says: —

"It is a striking fact, that those very things which the wise of this world and the righteous in their own esteem contemn as *commonplace* are the highest truths of God which it concerns man to know, and of which none indeed, in this Christian country, can be ignorant, but such as wilfully close their eyes and stop their ears against the light of Nature and the voice of Revelation. All knowledge, human and divine, is easy of attainment in precise proportion as it is essential to our happiness; and there is not throughout the whole system of creation or of providence a more glorious proof of the wisdom and the goodness of the Almighty than this circumstance, much as it has been overlooked by preachers and moralists, who too often perplex what is plain, and exalt as most excellent that which is most difficult. This is looking at near-hand objects from the wrong end of the telescope, that diminishes their forms and casts them into distance; while it is attempting to explore with a microscope those which are placed as far from us as the heavenly bodies are from the orbit of the earth. With the naked eye, if that eye be single, the weakest worm in human shape may discern 'the narrow way that leadeth unto life' and unchangeable felicity, — but it required the soul and the sagacity of a Newton to unravel the many-coloured woof of the rainbow, and to discover the cause why the leaf detached from the tree falls to the ground, — so infinitely more simple are 'the things that belong to our peace' than those secrets, however sublime and interesting in themselves, which only add to our knowledge without improving our lives."

As Colonel Wardle had been the popular idol during the preceding year, so "Burdett for ever!" was the cry which inaugurated his successor. With his noisy patriotism, the divorce and remarriage of Buonaparte, the unfortunate Walcheren expedition, and the opera-

# CHAP. XXXVI.

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WHAT a contrast, alike in quantity exhibited between the twelve months' writing, in a provincial newspaper pu ago, and one of current date! In tl —and the remark will apply to the ceding — there is hardly a single exar to reproduce in detail the observatio public meetings; in fact, we believe J ...y never employed a regular "reporter" in his establishment. His own remarks, brief as they generally were in comparison with the "leading articles" of our contemporaries, were often intermitted, and sometimes for weeks in succession. In his first number, this year, instead of dilating on the aspect of affairs at "the seat of war" abroad, or the position of political parties at home, the editor addressed his readers, as usual, on the lapse of time, and the mutability of human hopes — trite topics enough; and not often introduced into newspaper arti-

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n the orbit of the earth. With the naked eye, if that
single, the weakest worm in human shape may discern
rrow way that leadeth unto life' and unchangeable
— but it required the soul and the sagacity of a
to unravel the many-coloured woof of the rainbow,
and discover the cause why the leaf detached from the tree falls to the ground, — so infinitely more simple are 'the things that belong to our peace' than those secrets, however sublime and interesting in themselves, which only add to our knowledge without improving our lives."

As Colonel Wardle had been the popular idol during the preceding year, so "Burdett for ever!" was the cry which inaugurated his successor. With his noisy patriotism, the divorce and remarriage of Buonaparte, the unfortunate Walcheren expedition, and the opera-

tions of the allied forces in the peninsula, the journalist found plenty of employment for a pen reluctantly withdrawn from more congenial exercise.

*James Montgomery to William Roscoe.*

"Sheffield, Jan. 1. 1810.

"DEAR SIR,

"Mr. Bowyer's agent having informed me that in visiting Liverpool he has a letter to present to you, and that he is commissioned to lay before you specimens of Mr. B.'s publications, including his work on the Abolition of the Slave Trade, to which I have been a contributor, I would not omit the opportunity of assuring you that, though it is a long time since I wrote to you—and yet longer since I was gratified with hearing from you,—I retain the most lively sense of that kind notice which you have already been pleased to take of my former poems, and to say that indeed I feel my cheek warmer and my pulse quicker when I think how soon your eye will pass over the pages which breathe with my spirit in this superb book. I know that you will read these not only with indulgence, but with a desire to be delighted; and as the very wish to be pleased is half of the pleasure which we seek, I have at least as much hope that you will not be greatly disappointed, as I have fear that the poem may fall short of the generous expectations which you may have formed concerning it. But I have not a moment of time to throw away on this subject at present; and you may congratulate yourself on escaping a tale as tedious, if not as terrible, as a voyage in the hold of a slave ship from Guinea to the West Indies, concerning my labours and sufferings, and disappointments, on the 'middle passage' between the undertaking and the completion of my task; but, above all, the 'hope deferred,' that made my 'heart sick,' of the appearance of the book, which was pledged to me to be published this day twelve months ago, and is yet in embryo. To console myself—or rather to employ my restless and insatiable mind, for ever aspiring to heaven or falling headlong to earth again—I have been toiling upon a new theme;

a theme almost of pure invention, in which I have had characters and incidents to work out of the very rock of thought, and discouragements of all others the most humiliating and heart-chilling — the discouragements of the few friends I have about me here — friends as many to a man as Job had, and as well disposed to comfort an afflicted poet, who wants both the patience and the wife of Job to make censorious critics tolerable. All these saw my first canto, and all wondered, and pitied, and condemned both my choice of subject and the execution of it. I was so *dumbfounded* that I became silent for nearly three months, and began to fear that I should never recover my poetical speech again. However, my tongue, like Samson's hair, grew again after it had been clipped, and I produced a second canto. This all my critics (one excepted, to whom I would not show it,) praised as vehemently as they had reprobated its predecessor. This triumph encouraged me to proceed; but yet with such fear and trembling, that though I have finished two more cantos, concluding the poem, I have not dared to show a line of them. Whatever other men do, poets, I presume, always take their own advice; I shall therefore send this piece, which I shudder to submit to the eye of friendship, to press in a few weeks, and cast it before the public —aye, and the Edinburgh reviewers. This may be a very foolish thing, but as I have very wise reasons for doing it, I can justify myself to my own vanity, at least, and I must take the risk of what may follow. I shall print with this a few smaller pieces: of the success of these I am less doubtful,—perhaps for no other reason than that they are shorter, and more likely to please gentle readers, who love to take no pains, but to receive poetical impressions as a lake does the images of sky and land around it.

"I am very respectfully, your friend and servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"W. Roscoe, Esq."

*James Montgomery to William Roscoe.*

"Sheffield, Feb. 26. 1810.

"DEAR SIR,

"If ever you find my correspondence troublesome, I hope you will take all the blame to yourself for having encouraged me to presume upon a good-nature which ought never to be abused, but which for that very reason is the more likely to be tried to the uttermost. I am so great a sinner in neglecting to answer the letters of my friends, till all the patience of idleness is worn out, and I can no longer bear the reproaches of my own conscience for delays as vexatious at least to myself as they can be to them, that I am sometimes secretly glad, when they, and especially those whom I value most, are guilty of similar offences against the laws of absent friendship. I am thus glad for two reasons;—first because I have to think others as bad as myself in that sin which, because it is my darling, I most readily forgive; and in the second place, because a letter is always most welcome when most unexpected,—that is, when 'hope deferred' has made 'the heart sick' and it is getting well again by resignation to whatever *may* come: then, I appeal to yourself, *can* anything better come than a *healing leaf* from that 'tree of life,' as Solomon calls the fulfilment of the 'desire'? I wish I could refer you to the chapter and verse in Proverbs where the sentiment stands, which might help you to understand the meaning of this enigmatical allusion; but I can neither stay to explain it myself, nor find the passage for you at present. If my heart had been thus sickened, your last letter was such a healing leaf, that rather than not have been so sweetly and soothingly pacified, I would have fretted for five months longer at your silence. But lest my paper should be filled before my epistle is begun, here I will return to the contents of yours, and thank you most truly for the kindness with which you received my criticisms on your little poem of the 'Butterfly's Birthday.' What they were I know not now, but the value which you so generously put upon them will

not be altogether thrown away, because though the conciousness of your good opinion might make me proud, it *shall* make me humble; for I think I can be humble, and enjoy the delight of being commended by you, as intensely, yes, more exquisitely than if I were puffed up into an unworthy self-conceit of my own merit. I know that at the least half of the worth of my remarks in your indulgent esteem consist in their being *mine*, and I cannot conceal from my own vanity that half of the praise which you have bestowed upon these came from your heart before you consulted your head. And this is as it ought to be on both sides! Not that we should ever flatter any man, and least of all our friends, but we should not be ashamed or afraid of being found in the wrong, when we are sincerely so, and on the right side, the side of liberality. Whatever freedom, however, I may have taken with your beautiful Butterfly, I intend to afford you an opportunity for ample retaliation. When I wrote last I was so tired out with Mr. Bowyer's procrastination in bringing forward his pompous volume on the Abolition of the Slave Trade, that I had determined to put off the small edition of my poems on that subject *sine die;* and instead of bringing it out as a rider to Mr B.'s book, I meant to publish the piece which I mentioned in my last as having occupied, and indeed almost exhausted, my mind, during the latter half of last year. The instant I have finished a new poem I wish all the world to see it; in the joy of its birth I forget all the anguish it cost me, and only anticipate the renown it shall bring me for ages to come! When I wrote last I was in my first love with this fairest offspring of my imagination, and which had given more pain than any of its elder brethren. I therefore wrote too passionately concerning it, and have probably excited a hope in your breast, of merit which you can never meet with in any work of mine. Be this as it may, my own transports soon subsided, and yielded to fears, of such foreboding and appalling import, that my heart sunk under them; and though I had arranged with Messrs. Longman for the early appearance of this paragon of poetry, I retreated, even after

the manuscript was sent to London. I have breathed more freely ever since, though the recollection how nearly my rashness had brought my reputation to a stake at which it would have inevitably been burnt to ashes, and scattered on the winds, makes me shudder, even in the conscious security of being still in manuscript, out of which I shall certainly not creep for ten or twelve months to come. Therefore, with all its sins upon its head (which my present terrors may, after all, magnify as much beyond the truth, as my former fondness exalted its merits), you shall see it. I therefore write now to request you to inform me, at your own convenience, how I may send the copy to you to secure its safe delivery. The MS. will be in the hands either of my bookseller, or some friend in London, till the latter end of March. As I have neither room nor time at present to say more concerning it, I shall defer any hints that may be necessary to prejudice you in its favour, before you begin the perusal of this wild offspring of my muse. I won't attempt to bias your judgment, but I *will* try to bribe your heart before you take the critic's chair. With respectful remembrance to all your family,

"I am truly, your obliged friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"William Roscoe, Esq., Allerton Hall, near Liverpool."

### *James Montgomery to Miss Pearson.**

"Hartshead, March 30. 1810.

"DEAR MISS PEARSON,

"I enclose letters to my brother [Rev. Ignatius Montgomery] and Messrs. Longman and Co. You need not deliver either till it perfectly suits your convenience. Twelve months hence will do as well as next week. They are not letters of a day, I assure you, nor are they every-day letters; for if they have no other recommendation (and indeed I know of no other), they accompany my best wishes for your

* A Sheffield lady, for whom Mr. Gales printed a volume of poetry in 1790.

health and happiness in the situation to which you are going, and in every other to which the good Providence of God may direct you hereafter. You will find my brother a plain man; but he is an honest man, and has a heart as warm and a hand as willing to do good as if he had ten times more ostentation about him than you will find. Some men show off best at first, like new counters. My brother, like old gold, grows brighter with rubbing; aye, if you draw him into wire or beat him into leaf, he will be sterling to the last.

"Farewell. I am truly your friend and servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Miss Pearson."

On the 10th of April died John Brown, M. D., an individual to whose benevolent disposition the town of Sheffield was greatly indebted, and whose memory Montgomery has gratefully embalmed in the "General Preface" to his Poetical Works, as one of his "earliest, longest, and best benefactors." The "Iris" contained a glowing eulogy on the character of this excellent man, and successfully advocated the placing of a marble bust of him, by Chantrey, in the board-room of the General Infirmary — a noble charity of which he had been the generous originator and the zealous patron.

The dedication of a little volume published by the "Associate Minstrels" to "their friend James Montgomery," was a graceful acknowledgment of his complimentary verses "to Anne and Jane" * Taylor, written on the blank leaf of their "Hymns for Infant Minds"— a chaste collection of moral verse, in which an infantine simplicity of style is combined with direct lessons on a variety of subjects.

* Works, p. 291.

*William Roscoe to James Montgomery.*

"Allerton, April 13. 1810.

"My dear Sir,

"I have so much to say to you, that I shall make this letter very short, reserving to another but very early opportunity my further remarks. Since I last wrote to you, I have had the pleasure of reading your fine poem of the 'West Indies;' I have been delighted with the simplicity and pathos, no less than with the poetical ornament and spirit with which it abounds. It has confirmed me in an opinion which I have before ventured to advance in public, viz., that the highest class of poetry is that which is founded on a simple energy of expression which strikes like an electric spark from the breast of the writer to that of the reader. When this can be effected, it precludes the necessity of all further explanation; and it is only where this cannot be done, that the writer is obliged to repeat his stroke, and work his way by metaphors and similes, and all the artillery of poetry, till he has made his reader perceive his idea as clearly as he perceives it himself. Unfortunately, however, these helps and stilts have been generally considered as the essence of poetry, and some people think that the merit of a poem consists in the quantity of these materials employed in it; whilst in fact the merit consists in the strength of expression and depth of feeling communicated to the reader. You must not, however, suppose that I think your poem wants these secondary, and, indeed, in every work, essential ornaments. On the contrary, I think the figurative parts sufficiently frequent, well introduced, and well supported: but still the vital principle of this, as of every other work of art, consists in the impression made on the feelings by those true and simple touches of nature, which it is impossible for the human bosom to resist.

"I had scarcely closed this work when I received your other poem in MS. of the 'World before the Flood,' which I have read with all the interest excited by the former work, which I assure you was fully kept up. The subject is grand, striking, and original; without being carried to

that extravagant or hazardous extreme which, from your description of it, I was in some degree prepared to expect. It affords an opportunity of many fine incidents; amongst which the contest of Cain for the harp of Jubal, and the soothing of his madness, is conspicuously excellent. In this poem, even more than in your former, you have given interest to the work by those striking, concise, and affecting expressions to which I have before referred, and which you have so frequently drawn from their richest fountain — the books of the Old and New Testament. As this vessel is, however, yet in the hands of the potter, I shall venture, in the freedom of friendship, to make a few observations upon it, being firmly of opinion that you will not be less satisfied with such a proceeding than by that general and indiscriminate approbation which it is so easy to give, and which, therefore, is of so little value. These observations I must, however, postpone for the present, only assuring you that I have nothing essential to object to; that I have hitherto found no ground for censure; and that the few remarks I may make will chiefly relate to the arrangement and disposition of the parts, so as to improve the general effect of the whole. Believe me, my dear sir, with the sincerest esteem,

"Yours most truly,

"WILLIAM ROSCOE.

"James Montgomery, Esq., Sheffield."

A letter of critical remarks followed this.

*James Montgomery to William Roscoe.*

"Sheffield, April 24. 1810.

"DEAR SIR,

"I am ashamed to have two letters of yours lying before me unanswered. I am not sorry, however, in my heart, that I did not write to you last month, as I intended, to prepare you (that is, to prejudice you, if possible) for the indulgent reading of my manuscript poem. In this instance, my inveterate indolence has done me a service, for which I would thank it, but that it is under a thousand times more obligations to me, for being cherished in my bosom at

the expense of friendship, duty, religion, everything, than it can return by all the good it may do me to the end of my life,—which I am aware will be just as much as it cannot help. The service which it has most unwittingly rendered me is this, that it has spared me the ungracious labour of giving you a long and probably very unsatisfactory explanation of my views in writing the poem of the 'World before the Flood,' anticipating your censures, and indirectly but anxiously endeavouring to conciliate your judgment, if not to win your applause, by stealth and surprise. I dare say I should have attempted all this had I written a fortnight ago; for after I had determined to submit the copy to your examination, I was too solicitous that you should at least read it with as little difficulty and misunderstanding as possible, that I could not have forborne pleading warmly in behalf of a fair and full hearing of my cause before you pronounced a decisive and irrevocable sentence. This solicitude arose as well from the consciousness of the extraordinary defects of the piece, particularly with respect to the management and interest of the story, if it can be called a story, as from the objections, numerous and well-founded, of several critical friends both here and in London. Some of these objections seemed insurmountable; and the more discouragingly so, because in a few instances where I had exerted, nay, exhausted, all my strength, I had failed even to make myself intelligible. All this labour in vain I have been spared; and I am inexpressibly glad that you received, and read, and formed a general opinion of the work before I knew that it had been delivered to your bookseller. I have, therefore, now not one word to say in extenuation of its faults, or in behalf of its merits: both are before you, and your friendly strictures on the former will be exceedingly acceptable, whenever it may suit your convenience to send them. It is sufficient triumph to me to have obtained so liberal a portion of your applause on the whole subject, as your last inestimable letter contains. I desire no more, lest I should presume; but with a sincerity which I would not feign, I entreat you to be quite frank in stating your senti-

ments on the errors of this poem. I shall be especially thankful for any hints on *the plan* of which *the principal defect is the perfect unity of time, place, and action*, that requires so many retrospective and incidental explanations concerning characters and events, as almost to destroy that very unity, and render the most simple succession of events that were ever woven into a poetical tale, more broken and perplexed than if the time had been extended, the scene varied, and the action divided, suspended, and renewed as occasion required. The truth is, that this poem, involving the greatest events in the universe, from the creation to the day of judgment, is all in one breath; and unless it can be read in a breath I fear that it will be found incomprehensible. I have exercised much severe and fruitless thought on this view of the piece, since it was completed according to my original conception, which I still am perverse enough to think the best in the abstract, though to please, — and poetry must either please or perish, — I fear it will be necessary to introduce considerable alterations in the general arrangement. I have not made up my mind to this humiliating and frightful task, for the best of all possible reasons — I cannot yet please myself with any new scheme; and indeed I have determined not to trouble myself in earnest about it for some months to come. In that interval I shall hope with an anxiety as painful as fear for your expected comments; but you must not hurry, — take your own time, and write, if not all that you think, all that you think will do me good.

"Your obliged friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"William Roscoe, Esq., Allerton Hall, Liverpool."

*James Montgomery to William Roscoe.*

"Sheffield, June 1. 1810.

"DEAR SIR,

"I thank you truly for your remarks on my manuscript, which will return to me far more estimable than it went, having been thought worthy since I saw it of exer-

cising the critical powers of five men of distinguished talents, who honour me with their friendship. Among these, though 'last,' you are not 'least' in my regard, any more than you are in the eye of the world, which looks up to you above them all; and I really have a good mind to follow the example of the world, and place you, on *this* occasion, far above your four co-critics,— for the best of all possible reasons, because, though I am sure you find fault as sincerely as they do, you find fault much more sparingly and gently than even the dearest of these, who is the friend of my heart, with whose movements he is perhaps better acquainted than any one living beside. Now, though I dare say, if I were to try, I could pay you as many fine compliments for your magnanimous forbearance, as ought to make both you and me blush (though for very different causes), I will say no more on this head, because I am sure the sooner I quit ceremonious acknowledgment the better you will be pleased, and the less you will have occasion to suspect my integrity, or to doubt my gratitude for the pains which you have taken with my poem. After all, I do not know whether I should not have liked your critique better if it had been more severe, and given me an opportunity of defending myself with spirit, whereas now I must plead guilty to all your charges, and either obviate them by correction, or confess my incompetence to amend my bad ways. However, as it is insufferable to be censured and not reply, and especially not to reply for want of a word to say, as is literally my case at present, I will fill up the rest of this sheet with some explanations which you will not deem impertinent. The first idea of this poem was the translation of Enoch to heaven; this I chose about twelve months ago for a subject, and immediately set about inventing a story to introduce it. When the giants came into my head, I thought them mighty clever fellows, and very suitable for my purpose; and the noble hint in the eleventh book of 'Paradise Lost' suggested the plan of the patriarch's being snatched out of the hands of violence in the moment of most imminent peril. The fable, as it now stands, gradually

grew out of my meditations on this theme, which at that time seemed to me the most pregnant and promising that I had ever conceived. Now as I was always an abhorrer of war,— of every war except the war of liberty, the war that is as just and necessary as resistance to the murderer at the door of your bed chamber, — I determined to make my giants the greatest warriors on the face of the earth, and above all, to make their king the greatest hero, not only of the old world, but incomparably superior to all the Alexanders and Cæsars of the new. At the beginning of the poem, therefore, I have introduced him like a meteor in the zenith, outshining all the stars of heaven, that in the conclusion he might fall like a meteor over a desert, and the moment and the place of his disappearance be for ever unknown. I have found him at the completion of his hopes, as well as the summit of his glory, in the entire conquest of the world; and I have left him baffled, defeated without a battle, disgraced, a fugitive, to perish at some uncertain period by the wiles and the villany of a woman. Hercules and Alexander of course were my models here; the judgment is just according to my ideas of poetical justice; I acknowledge with you that the death which he is to suffer is *unworthy* of him, but you must acknowledge with me that he *deserves* it. I have exalted him above all heroes that I might abase him in proportion; and thus degrade the *Moloch-virtues*, which are held in such admiration to this day, that I know not whether the infant sacrifices in the valley of Hinnom were more detestable to heaven, than the butcheries of many a well fought field in Christian Europe. The only reference intended, and the only reference worthy of my subject, from ancient to modern times, was from the atrocity of war before the Flood, to the atrocity of war after the Flood. I could not, on such a high argument, stoop to shadow out recent events and living personages under ante-diluvian characters and gigantic outrages. No; it is the glory of my plan, — and I am neither ashamed nor afraid to boast of this, because it is plain matter of fact,— that no little views have been permitted to narrow it: the basis of my

poem is as broad as that of a pyramid, and the form of the superstructure is as simple; I dare not say that the top reaches heaven, but it aspires thither. You have, therefore, read and judged the poem rightly, notwithstanding you were misled in your first apprehension of it by my own wild and unintelligible hints concerning it, which I recollect were written in a great bustle one evening, and that is all I recollect of them. You may be sure that I am very glad to find that the plot, on the whole, was sufficiently clear and comprehensible to you. The digression at the end of the first canto has been a stumbling-block to every reader; yet the point of history (of fable if you will) alluded to in it was so essential to my view of the whole subject, that I was determined to hazard it even as it stood, rather than sacrifice what I regard as the close and the climax of my giant hero's tale, if I could not introduce it better. You have given me a happy hint of which I shall not fail to avail myself in one way or other. I know not what to say about the winding up of the poem. Assuredly every reader will *expect* the giants to attempt the storming of Paradise. Their total destruction must be the inevitable and instantaneous consequence; at least, I fear that any other *dénouement* will, equally with the present, disappoint the sanguine reader. To this I can never consent. If I could have brought *the Deluge* (the date of the poem is 600 years before the Flood) upon them, I would have eagerly taken advantage of so magnificent a conclusion; but if I destroy them now, it must be by fire from Paradise, or by the floods of Euphrates, by the sword of the seraphim, or a convulsion of the earth: against all these I have insuperable objections. However, your remarks on this part of the subject are good seeds sown in a very willing, if not a fertile soil; they will grow up in my mind, and next autumn, perhaps, produce a satisfactory, though not a very plenteous harvest. My thoughts have already grown warm and active upon this most important point, and they will never cease to turn and tremble towards it till I have compassed the whole circle of invention in search of a surer resting-place at the end of my

antediluvian labours. The principal objection at present seems to be, that it is not sufficiently made out that the giants may not return after their flight. I confess this is an objection which I neither felt nor anticipated myself; but as both you and another of my critics have surmised it, *that* defect at least must be obviated. I had thought, that their panic being supernaturally brought upon them by the most awful apparitions that the invisible world itself could disclose, they would never dare again, even in imagination, to disturb the peace of Eden: but this may be more emphatically impressed upon the reader's mind than it is in its present form. I must weary you no longer on this head. Your particular criticisms are all, without exception, just; every passage ought to be reformed or retrenched. The latter is a hard word when I refer it to the comparison of the feats of the infant Time to those of the infant Hercules. I know that I ought to play the serpent with this comparison, and strangle it in its cradle; but I verily fear that it will play the Hercules with me, and master me; therefore, be it remembered that I do not pledge myself to exterminate *this* monster. I was perfectly aware of the degree of relationship between Cain and Jubal; their being contemporaries, I had calculated by the patriarchal ages; Jubal was the sixth from Cain; *Enoch* the sixth from *Seth*, with whom even *Noah*, on turning to the genealogy, I found was living as a boy, at the era of my poem. Perhaps it may, however, be well to intimate this relationship; but I am afraid to touch the string of that *harp-scene* again: my poetry never before deserved or obtained so much praise as has already been lavished upon it. In one instance I have either miswritten or you misread a line. You quote page 29., line 4., "lovelier loveliness:" "lovelier l*o*neliness" it ought to be; but yet the word *love* occurring in the next couplet, almost *demands* the sacrifice of this lovely bit of apt alliteration. The song of the Hierophant—here again I am puzzled: the *sentiment* in the preamble to it is precisely what I intended him to deliver, but certainly the language is not what the reader expects. I don't know what I may do

hereafter with this passage. I am fully sensible both of its merits and its defect. It must stand over. Here I will say farewell, for if I take up another sheet, I shall fill it.

"I am, very respectfully,

"Your obliged friend and servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"William Roscoe, Esq."

*James Montgomery to William Roscoe.*

"Sheffield, July 23. 1810.

"DEAR SIR,

"The 'World before the Flood' arrived safely this morning. Once more I thank you for your kind and valuable strictures upon it, of which I hope to profit some time or other, but when I know not. I must lie fallow a little longer; this last crop has exhausted me. Besides, I am not so impatient now to be immortal at once as I was when I was at school, and confidently hoped to transcend all my poetical forerunners in every species of excellence. I will therefore quietly wait a little longer to watch the progress of my 'West Indies,' and other smaller poems, just published, which I have seen for the first time in their diminutive form to-day. I enclose two copies, thinking, from your exceedingly friendly disposition towards my *provincial* muse, that you will be pleased to see her new offspring as early as possible. After all, there really is a gratification (I don't care whether it be a rational one or no) in seeing anything *quite new*, and before every vulgar eye has gazed on it,—or, which is more likely in the present instance, has *overlooked* it. Some of these little pieces you may recollect having read in the 'Athenæum.' Others have never appeared in print, and have all their dew and fragrancy about them now, in the very dawn of their day,—a little day perhaps; but a few eyes *will* look with delight upon them, before the sun withers, or the wind scatters, or the hand of oblivion plucks them, and casts them away for ever. Yet *who* would rear flowers of poesy for such a fate? Thousands *do* it,—but does *one* intend it? I could not write at

all, if there were not in my breast a wish, so earnest and so strong, that I often mistake it for a hope after immortality. This dear delightful self-delusion soothes me under every discouragement, and cheers me under every neglect! Yet what is it? I know not; and if I *did* know, the charm might be broken; I might desire it no longer. Nothing within our reach appears so precious as that which is just beyond our reach, but which we may yet touch, and by touching only prove that we cannot grasp it, like a ball suspended by a single hair. I believe I understand this figure, probably you do not; I have no time to explain it, for which I am glad lest I should make nonsense of it.

"I am very respectfully,

"Your obliged friend and servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY."

The following is the earliest letter which we have seen from Montgomery to his brother Robert, who at this time carried on a successful grocery business in Woolwich:—

*James Montgomery to Robert Montgomery.*

"Sheffield, July 23. 1810.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"I answer your letter immediately, and I must answer it very briefly. Come down by all means into the country; but come to Sheffield first, and we will then determine where else you may go, and I will certainly accompany you for part, if not the whole, of your time. You will perhaps meet Ignatius here; but I do not know yet when to expect him. I am much concerned at your affliction, but I trust in God—I will pray to Him—that you may speedily and thoroughly recover. . . . . Take care of yourself, I beseech you; why, it is only twelve months since you had that dreadful scarlet fever! If you have an opportunity, pray step up to Doctor Gregory's before you come, with my best remembrance to him and his lady. Salute my dear sister, and the sweet children for me; tell them I will only

borrow you from them for a little time, to return you to them a better husband, and father, and man, than ever you have been yet. God bless you, my dear Robert!

"I am, your affectionate brother,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. Robert Montgomery, Woolwich."

We have again to regret the absence of Montgomery's letters from the "Eclectic" correspondence, the more so, as those of Parken are numerous this year — and they are not always cheerful; — family trials, and consequent personal anxieties, qualifying the ardour with which our amiable reviewer was preparing to don the barrister's wig and gown.

Sir Richard Phillips having recently reprinted in this country an American epic, written by the celebrated Joel Barlow, and entitled the "Columbiad," Montgomery reviewed the work at considerable length in the "Eclectic."* The poem, from its nationality, attracted some attention at the time; and, as Montgomery's critique evinced a good deal of discrimination, it made its way, we believe, far beyond the ordinary circle of "Eclectic" readers. The opinion entertained by the reviewer of Mr. Barlow's poem, was anything but favourable: and we are not aware that it has been reversed by other or higher authority. Merit it has of a kind — that is, vast labour: in this point of view the "Columbiad" is declared to be "one of the most extraordinary productions of the age; it is the work of an uncommon, but very perverted, mind. The same talents and information which have been," says the reviewer, "exhausted in heaping together this mountain of all the miseries of bad verse, had they been directed by elegant taste, and ennobled by religious principle, might have raised a

* Eclectic Review, vol. vi. p. 403.

monument more durable than brass to the honour of the poet and his country. Those who wish to contemplate the absurd speculations and degrading influence of infidel (not to say atheistic) philosophy, should read the 'Columbiad.'" We have heard Montgomery quote and admire, as he has done in the "Review," the closing thought of the following lines in allusion to the stupendous height of the mountains of the new world: —

"For here great Nature, with a bolder hand,
Rolled the broad stream, and heaved the lifted land;
And *here*, from *finished earth*, triumphant trod
*The last ascending steps of her creating God.*"

He also wrote a review of Grahame's "British Georgics."* Didactic poetry, to which class his countryman's work emphatically belonged, did not rank high in the reviewer's estimation, on the ground that it has no superiority over prose in the delivery and recommendation of practical precepts: —

"Hence," says he, "in a didactic poem, the finest passages are invariably those which are *not didactic*, — branches bearing flowers and fruit engrafted on a stock which of itself would bring nothing but leaves. Every poem of the kind, from the days of Hesiod to those of James Grahame (not excepting the most finished poem of ancient or modern times, the 'Georgics' of Virgil), establishes the truth, or rather the truism, here laid down."

In the summer Montgomery went to Harrogate, where he met with his friend Dr. Gregory, in company with whom, and Miss Beddome (afterwards Mrs. Gregory), he visited, for the first time, Fountain Abbey and Studley Royal: —

* Eclectic Review, vol. vi. p. 769.

"It was," said he, "one of the most agreeable little rambles I ever enjoyed. The ruins of the Abbey, you know, are considered among the most magnificent of the kind in the kingdom: and though there is a good deal of formality in the arrangement of the walks and of the water, still there is so much beauty and even luxuriousness in the grounds, and especially in the trees, that Art has not been able utterly to destroy Nature."

Another circumstance or two connected with this Harrogate visit may be mentioned. A lady of distinction was very formally introduced to the poet as an admirer of his genius, but who, it was obvious from her observations, had not even read his works! This incident was once adduced by him as a set-off against the overpraise of parties better informed. Another visitor, a Quaker, was represented by his friend as being anxious to be introduced to the poet; the latter, accordingly, was led up to the stranger, who appeared to be waiting for the interview, and said, "My name is Montgomery." —"I have *heard of thee*," was the astute reply of Broadbrim: and then both parties stood mute for some time! The pause gave Montgomery time to repent of his good-natured simplicity; for he was the last man in the world to intrude himself upon any person's attention. His old friend, heretofore Mrs. Hoole, who had become the wife of Hofland, the landscape painter, with whom she was residing at Harrogate, having solicited a line of recommendation from Montgomery on behalf of her husband, who was anxious to be elected an associate of the Liverpool Academy of Arts: he immediately wrote as follows to Roscoe:—

*James Montgomery to William Roscoe.*

"Harrogate, Aug. 13. 1810.

"DEAR SIR,

"Though this letter comes to ask a favour, it will of

itself be a proof of gratitude for your past kindness, by evincing my confidence both in your generosity and your independence, for I would not ask any thing of you, unless I were persuaded that you would feel yourself at perfect liberty either to comply with my request or decline it, according to your convenience or choice. A few minutes ago I was applied to by Mrs. Hofland, of this place, to know whether I could serve her husband, as a candidate for a place among the associates of your newly-established Academy for Painting, at Liverpool. I immediately mentioned your name, I trust without presumption; for I told her honestly that I had not a right to calculate upon more from your friendship on such an occasion, than that, if you were entirely disengaged, you would on my recommendation pay such an attention to Mr. Hofland's merits (the only claims that ought to prevail) as would enable you to determine for yourself whether he were worthy of the honour to which he aspires, and of the still more gratifying honour of having been advanced to it by your approbation and influence. Of Mr. Hofland, personally, I know little, and of his performances less: he appears to me in conversation a young man of much vivacity and considerable intellect; his paintings, as far as I can judge (but I must not pretend to decide) are not ordinary performances; at least some which are now exhibiting here among many others by various artists, when I look upon them (perhaps with partiality, the partiality of a poet who loves ideal excellence, and will forgive a thousand blemishes for one grace snatched beyond the reach of art, whether by happy chance or inspiration),—I say, when I look on some of his pictures here, I feel, or think I feel, some of that ineffable delight which genius alone has the power and the privilege of communicating in the exercise of a noble art. The less I say on this subject, the better probably for my credit, which I thus put to hazard, since I understand that Mr. Hofland has some pictures in your exhibition; I will therefore only refer you to them, wishing that the worst may be a better letter of recommendation than I can write, to induce you, if you are not pre-engaged to a rival, to do

him such good offices as may please, if they cannot elevate him to the height of his humble ambition. With *Mrs. Hofland* (formerly *Mrs. B. Hoole*) I have been long and intimately acquainted. She is a woman of singular genius, and I have known her through so many sorrows and sufferings, acting a generous, and in my mind a glorious part, that I could not refuse her so small a request as to name her husband to you in such a way as might direct your eye towards his merits, whatever they may be, and then leave you to act with perfect freedom according to the circumstances with respect to other candidates in which you may be placed *now* or *hereafter;* for, if I know my own heart, I am incapable of desiring in its most secret recesses to abuse your goodness, or take you by surprise in any way whatever. The greatest favour—yes, all the favour—I now ask of you is, after reading this letter, to do as shall seem best to yourself. I know you will do right. I have been so suddenly called upon to perform this little act of friendship to Mrs. Hofland, that I have had no time to study the most respectful terms wherein to hide the boldness of my application; but you will excuse all apparent rudeness of speech, liberally persuading yourself that I could not be guilty of wilful or even negligent disrespect to you. I am making a short stay at this place, and shall be at home in about ten days. Do not trouble yourself to acknowledge this letter formally; but whenever you shall please to write to me, say that you forgive the liberty which I have taken. I have no poetical news to communicate, and if I had, I have no time, as Mr. Hofland is sending to Liverpool this evening.

"I am with very great respect,

"Your much obliged friend and servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY."

Mr. Roscoe very willingly complied with his friend's request, and Hofland was at once elected an Associate of the Liverpool Academy.

On Montgomery's return from Harrogate, Parken

paid him a visit at Sheffield; when he not only shared "the hollow tree, the crust of bread, and liberty," promised by his friend, but enjoyed some delightful excursions amidst the beautiful scenery of the district. The interview was a gratifying one to both parties. On his return to London, Parken wrote (Oct. 9th), giving an account of his journey, and expressing the respect which he cherished towards his correspondent: he rejoiced that they had first become intimate on paper, that they had not seen each other until friendship had been riveted; for had it been otherwise, he might have been awed by the gravity of his correspondent, who might in turn have despised his youth.

The foregoing remark may perhaps appear necessary to justify what the writer presently says on a delicate topic: —

"It is," he proceeds, "much easier to write one's feelings than to speak them; and among the few subjects on which I could be happy to show you my whole heart, the most prominent is *yourself*. One of the topics, therefore, in which I am most interested is, you may be sure, that which *most* interests *you*. I presumed, as far as I durst in your presence, but not quite so far as to express fully my conviction (derived from very sufficient sources) that your apprehensions of infelicity are totally unfounded; that any one who was really worthy of you, would consider it only too much happiness to be united and devoted to you as a friend and a nurse; and that such an union would infallibly relieve the greater part of those very infirmities, both mental and bodily, which appear to you such formidable impediments. Be advised, my dear friend; do not procrastinate: I still hope it is not too late — but that if you attempt you will succeed; and then I am confident you will thank me as long as you live. How I should rejoice next summer to see a third added to our friendship, and that third — a female!"

Affectionate and judicious advice, in this, as in many a similar case, more easily given than taken.

Parken closed his long letter by telling Montgomery that he had not seen the Gregorys, the Montagues, or Josiah Conder, but had delivered his civilities to the Beddome and the Gutteridge families; that he had read Southey's "Madoc," and thought as highly of it as himself; and again thanked him for his inspiring conversation and personal kindness during their intercourse at Sheffield.

*William Roscoe, Esq., to James Montgomery.*

"Oct 6. 1810.

"DEAR SIR,

"I have also a long arrear of thanks to pay you for the present of your late volume of poems, which cannot fail to add another wreath to those you have already won. The lines on the lady* who 'Blest you with her latest breath,' are exquisitely affecting; almost beyond anything I ever read. There may, however, be something in sympathy of feeling; and I may perhaps resemble a musical instrument, which, although it can produce nothing of itself, may be so tuned as to vibrate when another string is struck in unison. This, you will observe, is said to preserve you from vanity, and to show you that the merit is not wholly your own, but depends in part upon us, your readers, without whose taste and judgment, *and all that*, all your delightful notes might as well be given to the winds."

*James Montgomery to Robert Montgomery.*

"Sheffield, Oct. 7. 1810.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"I have to acknowledge three letters from you since you left Sheffield, your visit to which place, I assure you, has drawn yet closer the bonds of brotherly kindness that always united my heart with yours; but which, from the long and wide separation that circumstances beyond our

* Works, p. 287.

power have made between us, has not been so renewed and strengthened from time to time as it would have been, had we lived nearer to one another. But the farther we have been removed, I have found the dearer we were when we met; and I trust that, in future, if we are spared a few years longer, we shall oftener see each other's face, and feel each other's love expressed in those sweet words and deeds which can neither be written nor performed at a distance, and which the heart acknowledges with secret gratitude and delight. I should have written a fortnight ago, but Mr. John Bailey being expected from Harrogate, I waited for his return, that I might tell you about him, as you seemed particularly curious to hear of your old fellow-traveller and chum at the Bell. During the last fortnight of his stay he grew better, and has returned home apparently much improved. To this improvement, *for aught I know*, an hour's conversation with Sir Francis Burdett may have greatly contributed. The baronet honoured him with a call one morning at the Bell, and they settled all the rights and wrongs of England, I presume, in a very little compass. I wish you and I could have been present at their *tête-à-tête* invisibly: it would have greatly enlightened me, I dare say, on many abstruse and incomprehensible subjects; but I suspect it would have diverted you, and you would have betrayed us by coughing at their solemn and significant phizzes,—and I am afraid I should have joined you, notwithstanding my profound veneration for the two august personages. Last week I had a letter from Ignatius, from *Matlock*, whither he had been compelled to repair for the recovery of his health. Agnes is with him; and if they stop till the end of this week, I think I shall go over to them for a day or two. . . . I am well; and God bless you and your dear family.

"Your affectionate brother,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. Robt. Montgomery, Woolwich."

A remark having been made relative to the fervent

tone of the following letter, Montgomery said it was among "the coolest" he had ever received from his worthy friend.

*Dr. Gregory to James Montgomery.*

"Royal Military Academy,
"Dec. 21. 1810.

"It is well, my dear sir, that friendship does not require frequency of letter-writing to keep it alive. If it did, the friendship which I am persuaded subsists between you and myself must have been as cold as death for the last year and a half. But I have a confidence that it rests upon a firm foundation, and therefore, though I cannot but regret our long silence, I have no apprehension that it either indicates, or will produce, a diminution of esteem or of affection. It is a severe trial to be long and far separated from those we love, with whose conversation we are delighted, and by which we are improved: but it is more so to be so circumstanced as scarcely ever to have leisure to write any other than a mere hurried letter of business. Such, however, is my case; and such, I know, is yours. But, though I have thus for so long a period been kept from writing to you, be assured I have not forgotten you. My dear Anne and I frequently talk of you; speak of the two or three delightful rambles we had with you in Yorkshire; and wish we could retrace and explore the same scenes in the same company. If your mind yearns with the same kind of sympathy towards us as ours towards you, and if there be anything in that communion of souls of which I sometimes dream in my waking hours, our spirits may have often met together in some midway sylvan spot in Nottinghamshire (Clifton churchyard, for example), where you may have been eager to drop your 'Harp of Sorrow,' and strike some extatic tones upon a different instrument. In truth, I often work myself into a very serious belief of this mental fellowship; nay, according to the notions I commonly entertain, it is difficult to avoid it. For when I think of my friends, I think of nothing but their minds; or, at least, if I think of their

persons at all, it is so far as they embody or bring into exercise some virtue or excellence: and as to the delights experienced on reading a letter from a friend, I consider them as results of the true operation of mind upon mind, communicated through a medium which brings distant souls into contact, and makes them act without the incumbrance of our 'clogs of clay.'

"But why do I trouble you with my theories? Let me rather ask you how you are? and how you are going on? Whether you are again cultivating your acquaintance with the inhabitants of the 'World before the Flood?' and whether you do not soon mean to make us nearly as well acquainted with them as you are? We were much delighted with two of the cantos (I think the 2nd and 4th); and I sincerely hope you will not alter *them* much. Indeed, according to the impression they have left upon my mind, none but yourself could make *them* at all better; and I don't see how *you* could manage it, unless your muse should be prompted by the angel Gabriel.

"We have had Parken's sister, Caroline, tarrying a few days with us this week. She is a very clever, amiable, and interesting girl, and, like all the rest of us, a passionate admirer of her brother. She has just set off for Bourton, in Gloucestershire, to attend the sick, and I fear the *dying*, bed of her elder sister, Mary. She has gone with a heavy heart: and well she may, for this will be the third sister whose eyes she has closed in a very few years. I mention all this, because I know you feel as interested in what concerns our friend Parken as we do. His anxiety about the different branches of his family has at times pressed very heavily upon his spirits, and has so much injured his health as, at times, to make us seriously uneasy for him.

"Having brought myself nearly to the end of my paper, I must introduce the greetings and good wishes of my dear Anne, who desires to be very affectionately remembered to you. We heard from your brother about your autumnal sojournment at Harrogate; and most sincerely hope you have received benefit from it. Pray let me hear from you

*soon;* and don't judge of my interpretation of that word by the *tardity* of my correspondence.

"Believe me, dear sir,

"Most affectionately yours,

"OLINTHUS GREGORY."

At Dr. Gregory's table Montgomery met with T. D. Alexander, Esq., the architect, who many years afterwards wrote to ask Mrs. Gregory if she recollected what her husband paid for the portrait of himself by Chantrey, which used to hang in the dining-room at Woolwich? "And do you recollect," he adds, "a meeting to drink tea at your house, to meet Montgomery and Chantrey, to hear the former read, I think, his poem of the 'World before the Flood'* — was not Daniel Parken there? and was not that in 1809, or so?" These inquiries were transmitted by Mrs. Gregory to Montgomery, who answered as follows: —

*James Montgomery to Mrs. Gregory.*

"Sheffield, Dec. 22. 1842.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"Though I did not indeed recognise your handwriting under the post-mark of Brighton, yet in every line of your letter I recognised the kind friend whom I had so long known and esteemed at Woolwich; and many, many precious hours of days that are now with the years beyond the Flood rose up in remembrance, not from their graves, but from their sleeping-rooms, and for awhile entranced my spirit in their recollected images and associations of the living and the dead, especially (among the latter) of two,— him who was the dearest, while he lived, to you, and now I will not say amongst the dead, but amongst the Immortals,

* "Dr. Gregory had the 'World before the Flood' in his hands some time; but I never read the poem, or any part of it, in company. — J. M." It was, in fact, Parken who read it.

dearer still,—if that may be between souls so happily united as yours were in the bonds of the tenderest affection on earth, and by those more indissoluble ties that made your union a seal of unbroken love, as one in Christ, and I trust as one with Him, heirs of eternal salvation through that power which He gives to those that believe in Him to become the Sons of God (John, i. 12.). He rests in peace in his Father's house. The other, whose spirit your letter raised before me — seen only by the eye that sees the things which are invisible, as he looked, and as he spoke, and as he moved, and verily as he *was* when an inhabitant of this world, yet sainted to my mind as *now*, and for a long time past, the inhabitant of another world, wherein dwelleth righteousness—was Daniel Parken, whom you also mention as associated in your memory with myself, both of us being deeply and delightfully indebted to dear Dr. Gregory for innumerable tokens of kindness which he showed us, when opportunity enabled him to let us feel the warmth of his heart, and the shake of his hand, in which he carried that heart, and with which he expressed, as well as with his eyes and his voice, the welcome with which he was wont to meet, and the kindness with which he used to part with us.

"I am sorry that I cannot give you any clear information on the subject concerning which you inquire; but I will tell you all I can call to mind, in connection with Dr. Gregory, Mr. Parken, and Sir Francis Chantrey. The latter was then a young man, little known in the metropolis, but just beginning to break out of obscurity, in which he was helped by a gentleman whom I dined with at your house, — Mr. Alexander, an architect, who was then engaged in building the new Naval Asylum at Greenwich. It was in the autumn of 1808, that, being in London, my friend Parken introduced me to Dr. Gregory. We soon became cordial acquaintances, and I repeatedly saw him during that time. But I think, though I cannot be sure, it was in 1812, in the spring, when, being again a visitor in London and Woolwich alternately, I met Mr. Alexander at your table. He and I sat together at dinner, and being informed that he had

given Chantrey a commission to execute the busts of four of our great admirals (Howe, St. Vincent, Duncan, and Nelson, I believe), I was glad to have an opportunity of answering Mr. A.'s questions concerning him, with all the fervency of friendly feeling, and all the sincerity of truth, as an artist of the highest promise, and in every respect worthy of the patronage of those who might have the means of serving him in his profession. Mr. A. listened to my representations with great favour, and expressed himself much pleased with what he already knew of the young man and his performances. Some days afterwards, calling upon Chantrey at Mrs. D'Oyley's, in Curzon Street* (who proved herself his earliest, and, through her connections, the most efficient friend, at the most critical period of his life, by at once giving him a fair chance of being known by his works, — no easy matter in the events of a genius in any line, working himself out of the quarry of the mass into a figure claiming, commanding, and at length compelling the admiration of mankind, especially of that class of society whose admiration is both fame and fortune in a liberal art like sculpture, which cannot be cultivated without the countenance and support of wealth and station, to recommend and reward its aspiring and adventurous practitioners.

"Chantrey had gained such a vantage ground by Mr. Alexander's commission, that he ever afterwards looked forward in his career of laudable ambition to exalt himself by exalting his art in that peculiar branch of which he eventually became the glory. His busts, at once real, ideal, and intellectual, in the expression of soul as well as features, rank among the finest productions of the kind, if not in making marble live, yet showing life in marble, as love and friendship like to see it, especially when the archetype has disappeared in the light of eternity, not in the darkness of the grave; for how little, how almost nothing, do we think

* The sentence thus commenced is evidently unfinished, the writer having been carried away by the general sentiments which follow the mark of parenthesis, from the special object indicated by the dozen words preceding.

of the departed in that obscure sojourn of their mortal part! No; our thoughts of them are as they *were*—living, breathing beings under the sun; or as they *are*—unimaginably transfigured into forms too pure for eyes of flesh to look upon, but yet which affection, exalted by devotion, conceives in their beatitude to be like the Redeemer on Mount Tabor, for they see him as he is.

"I cannot recollect that I ever met Chantrey at Woolwich; if I had, I could hardly have forgotten the circumstance, because I was enthusiastically watching his progress, and encouraging (so far as I could) him to undertake far greater things than he ever ventured upon, though he had deeply meditated on two about which I have had repeated conversation and correspondence with him. Bold and happy as he was in the limited range of monumental sculpture, he either wanted the faculty of invention in a high degree, or ceased to cultivate it when wealth and honours flowed upon him in a spring-tide, without requiring him to labour or wait for them, as men of talent above stone-masonry or cabinet-making, must often do all their lives, yet never rise beyond precarious bread and questionable reputation, in an art where all below the highest rank is unattractive mediocrity in conception or execution, if not both. Chantrey, I know, took a cast of Parken's face *, of which he promised me a copy, but never gave it me. I imagine it was he [Parken] who introduced Dr. Gregory to the artist, as you say the portrait was painted from the cast without a sitting of the original. It must have been planned and executed between those three parties. I did not know that Chantrey painted portraits at all when I met him in London, and have no idea what his charges for such performances might be: in Sheffield, his charge was five guineas for a head—he probably might ask and get more in the metropolis.

"I am, truly, your friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mrs. Gregory, Brighton."

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* And also of Dr. Gregory; he likewise painted a portrait of Parken, only just before he finally laid down the pencil.

"Mr. Montgomery's letter," said Mr. Alexander to Mrs. Gregory, "interested me extremely; and the more so, as he forms precisely the same opinion as I do of Chantrey's view of art, having been confined too exclusively to monumental sculpture. If you could, with propriety, ask Mr. M. what the *two* subjects were which he says Chantrey had deeply meditated upon, it would be very kind." The lady accordingly wrote again, and promptly received the following letter, which, although equally with the former out of chronological order according to its date, may be properly introduced here in illustration of the period and matters to which it chiefly refers. The æsthetic remarks contained in it will probably be allowed to possess an interest beyond the subject which gave rise to them.

*James Montgomery to Mrs. Gregory.*

"The Mount, Sheffield, Dec. 31. 1849.

"My dear Friend,

"You shall not wait till next year for an answer to your second letter. I was glad, from the evidence under his own hand, that Mr. Alexander, whom I mentioned to you as one of the early and efficient friends of the late Sir Francis Chantrey, was still in the land of the living, and, I hope, making the world better by his presence in it, as a Christian, as well as adorning its surface with elegant and comfortable structures in the way of his profession of one of those arts which, when worthily exercised, may fairly rank with painting, sculpture, and poetry itself. For, though architecture be thoroughly artificial, it requires consummate taste and mastery of all its forms, combinations, and capabilities for arresting attention, and awakening solemn, sublime, and affecting emotions, associated with the purposes for which temples, palaces, hospitals, mausoleums, and (in proportion to their beauty and usefulness) other and humbler buildings, are raised in civilised countries. Bold imagination and fertile invention are as necessary for the

architect as for the poet, the musician, or the orator, whose works, after all, may be the most enduring of all that the mind of man can execute with his hands. But this is nothing to the subject of the present hasty letter,—the two projected, but unaccomplished (probably unattempted), sculptures by Chantrey, when he was luxuriating in the idea of hope long deferred, coming at last as a tree of life,—fame and fortune both appearing to court rather than to elude him, from the time that Mr Alexander befriended him. Those two subjects were the execution of a full-length statue of Satan (Milton's Satan, of course, for no other was worthy of his chisel), for which he had a commission from Lord Egremont, to be produced at his own time and on his own terms; or, if he preferred it, a work of equal magnificence, representing any other hero of history or of song;—he might follow his own choice.

"The fact was that Chantrey, among his first attempts at modelling, had formed in clay, on a grand scale, a head and bust of that Evil One, in the act and attitude of addressing the Sun, to tell him how he hated the beams that reminded him from what glory he had fallen. This, with two or three models of heads from the life, had been seen in the Royal Exhibition, about the year 1805, or 1806. The very conception (which, I believe, was his own) of such a subject by an inexperienced youth, and the embodiment of the same with such acknowledged ability as to attract the admiration of such a man as the late Earl of Egremont, was a proof that (if from prudence and faint-heartedness he afterwards expended his talents on matter-of-fact things) he had, nevertheless, latent powers of invention, and resources of imagination, which would have exalted him into rivalry with the greatest of ancient or modern artists in the highest line, had he given his whole soul and strength to the achievement not of the most marketable, but of the most elaborate and best performances of which his genius was capable.

"At the very time when I met him in London, after the execution of the four busts of Admirals, he asked me to furnish him, if I could, with a subject for a companion-piece to

his Satan above mentioned. After a little consideration, I recommended *Samson* (Milton's Samson), as exhibited in the opening of the tragedy of 'Samson Agonistes.' He instantly caught at the suggestion; and the next time we met, we went over the passage, as it may be found in the first scene, where Samson, bound and blind, is led forth from the prison, on a festival day of the Philistines, to a pleasant bank, with 'choice of sun and shade,' that he might enjoy the pure fresh air, and the cheering warmth of the luminary of day, while he was left to bewail, and bewail in vain, the total and irrecoverable loss 'of light, the prime work of God, to (him) extinct.' Chantrey so heartily entered into the view, that, if the fit had remained on him, and he had happened to have filled his hands with tempered clay at the moment, a Samson would have come out of them, such a one as would have shown that he himself was a Samson in his art. But I doubt whether he ever put forth a finger to execute the palpable idea.

"Two finer subjects for the display of transcendent excellence in their kind could not easily be selected: *singly*, each might have been a paragon; *associated*, the contrast would have been as kindred and as striking as perfection in such a case could require. Both he intended, or at least hoped, some time to perpetuate in marble,—but, alas! he had not the confidence in his own genius to do justice to it; that genius deserved more and better at his hands than he ever rendered to it in employing them to embody its conceptions.

"Only think what a pair of companions! Satan seeing the Sun, and cursing his beams! Samson, with his eyeless sockets, raising his face to the light which he could *not* see, and longing—longing in vain—to bless the Sun, and tell the beautiful source of life, not less than light, how he loved his beams,—the beams he never must behold again. 'Lucifer, the son of the morning,' fallen from heaven; Samson, the mightiest of men of woman born, fallen too as low on earth as man can be cast down by his fellow, in the malignity and bitterness of revenge for wrongs not to be forgiven, when an

oft-beaten enemy, by violence or treason, gets his otherwise invincible conqueror into his power, — as the Philistines dealt with Samson. But I must not expatiate on this. Chantrey appeared to me, in all our conversations on the question, to dread the attempt (as if conscious that he could not succeed in it, though I am sure he was mistaken) at representing action of almost any kind in statuary. I recollect he once mentioned to me a statue of Cicero, by Roubilliac either in Oxford or Cambridge, [?] in the full tide of eloquent inspiration, uttering one of his mighty orations, and *speaking* (as it were) *all over*, every limb and his whole body taking part in the delivery and discharge of his thunders; but the apparent life and action were to him (Chantrey) so real, so far similar, that the fine ideal of intellectual power, which it is the skill of the sculptor to body forth in the strength of comparative repose, was lost in the intensity of apparent passion, and the violence of muscular exertion.

"I can understand (at least I think I can) his objection to, and therefore his fear of, hazarding the exhibition of motion in marble; but I feel quite certain that it was rather a morbid than a sound feeling of taste and correct judgment of the capability of his art, which need not be a whit behind painting itself in representing all that man can do or suffer, so far as the limited range of subjects for the chisel can compete with the infinity of those on which the pencil can be exercised. Has not St. Paul been preaching for three centuries at Athens in Raphael's cartoon, and his audience, every one of them (each expressing, not in countenance only, but in attitude equally, how he is affected), to this hour sitting, standing, leaning, stretching, to gather his meaning while he brought strange things to their ears? and talking of Jesus and the resurrection, some mocked, some were incredulous, and some were disposed to hear further concerning that matter. Now it cannot be doubted that the whole of that marvellous composition might be sculptured in frieze by such hands as wrought the Elgin marbles, the high relief and perfect development of many of the figures in which prove that no violence of action or passion is too grotesque or outra-

geous, within the modesty of nature, to be expressed in stone, as well as on canvas. The attitude of St. Paul in the cartoon is so bold, and beyond the technical rule of contrast in the disposal of the limbs, and the pillar-like uprightness of the body itself, that it may be questioned whether any living painter, in treating the subject, durst have made such an experiment upon the diseased nerves of our modern dilettanti; though that very figure, in spite of sundry carping criticisms that have been passed upon it, and which the parrots of connoisseurship occasionally repeat, remains the admiration of all unsophisticated judges. Now that very figure might be as triumphantly brought out of marble as it has been delineated 'so simply, so severely,' on perishable paper.

"Had Michael Angelo translated Raphael's St. Paul from paper into Parian stone, his own Moses would not have been the unrivalled master-piece of his wonder-working hand. But, besides the Elgin reliques, in one of the most perfect specimens of antique sculpture (indeed the most marvellous one, — because in it is overcome the insuperable stumbling-block to Chantrey's advance to the crowning pinnacle of excellence in his art, — namely, the successful exhibition of muscular action, and bodily anguish, in the excess beyond further exertion of the one and further endurance of the other), the Laocoon and his children, struggling with the force of serpents of dragon-like dimensions, inextricably involving them in their strangulating folds, I am confident that there is no action or passion of the living or the dying, after this, which the genius of a Phidias, a Michael Angelo, or a Chantrey, might not master, if determined not to yield.

"In my last conversation with the latter on the commission from Lord Egremont, after fighting as hard as I could against his objections and self-created difficulties, we seemed to have come to an agreement respecting the poetic position in which Milton has placed his Satan, that, instead of the magnificent, indeed the stupendous, full-length, and full-stretch exhibition of him, about the middle of the first book of 'Paradise Lost,' when, risen from the burning lake, he calls up his prostrated legions,—

'Awake, arise, or be for ever fallen!'

—(see the description beginning with

'He scarce had ceased, when the superior fiend
Was moving towards the shore: his ponderous shield,
Ethereal temper, massy, large, and round,
Behind him cast,' &c.,

to the end of that paragraph,)—presenting at *this* his highest point of glory in that realm of darkness and despair, we thought that to take him as he struggles to emerge from the abyss, as he is shown a few paragraphs before—

'Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate
With head uplift above the wave, and eyes
That sparkling blazed; his other parts besides
Prone on the flood,' &c.;

—in that resurrection posture, while all his mighty limbs were sufficiently developed at once to satisfy the eye, and excite the imagination, by what was signified, though concealed, of his giant bulk,—advantage might be taken from every personal feature which the poet has given him, and the military panoply with which he has armed him—wings, spear, and shield. The human mind never conceived, nor did language ever paint to other minds than that of the inventor, an image of such transcendent grandeur as that of the 'superior fiend,' among his risen legions, a little further on in that book—

——————'He, above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
Stood like a tower: his form had not yet lost
All her original brightness; nor appeared
Less than archangel ruined, and the excess
Of glory obscured.'

Then follows the famous simile of the eclipse of the sun, who

——————'from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs. Darkened so, yet shone
Above them all the archangel: but his face

Deep scars of thunder had intrenched; and care
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride
Waiting revenge: cruel his eye, but cast
Signs of remorse and passion, to behold
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather,
(Far other once beheld in bliss) condemned
For ever now to have their lot in pain;
Millions of spirits for his fault amerced
Of Heaven, and from eternal splendours flung
For his revolt; yet faithful how they stood,
Their glory withered! As when Heaven's fire
Hath scathed the forest oaks, or mountain pines,
With singed top their stately growth, though bare,
Stands on the blasted heath,' &c.

Here I must leave off, lest I only darken counsel with a multitude of words, which can never depict the image that was in Chantrey's mind, and to which I believe he never even attempted to give a marble existence. 'Faint heart never won fair lady;' Chantrey's heart failed him on this occasion, and what he missed in youth he could not regain in manhood; nor, had he lived a hundred years, is it to be imagined that he would have achieved the victory over himself, to qualify him for such a conquest and triumph as were then within his reach, once, and no more again, — to bring from the depths of the infernal abyss that mysterious being whom Milton has, with unsurpassable sublimity, so painted to the mind, that the portrait seems drawn from the life, and wanting only the stone and the statuary to make it visible to the eye of flesh and blood.

"Chantrey, even as a painter, showed, at the time of which I am writing, that he was not so destitute of original invention as might be supposed by those who know his power only by the half-formed creations of busts, in which he excelled all contemporaries, but necessarily fell short of himself, and his undeveloped capabilities, by limiting these to works of a class comparatively inferior to that which he might have tried, with not less success, in that greater, nobler, and more comprehensive field of heroic enterprise. He

designed and half executed a picture in oil of our Saviour, with the two disciples, at Emmaus,—in the moment of his vanishing out of their sight, after he had been known to them in breaking bread. Now the youth who by his own mind, when he was neither sculptor nor painter, but hesitating between both, and felt within himself the power of choice to excel in either,— the youth who, for his earliest essay in modelling, seized upon Milton's 'Satan addressing the Sun,' and for the only historic composition which (so far as I know) he ever attempted,— that wonderfully affecting scene of the Supper at Emmaus,— must have had strength and fertility of original genius to have taken his place, and maintained it as an *inventor*, with the possibility — and *possibility* in such a case is *probability* — among the most illustrious of his predecessors, whether ancient or contemporary,— with the possibility (I think) of rivalling the greatest, and excelling the multitude, in the same proportion as he did actually rival the former and excel the latter in what may be called the portraiture of his art,— rendering 'the human face divine,' indeed 'divine,' so far as 'the music breathing in (that) face' can give intelligent note of 'the divinity that stirs within us,' when 'heaven itself points out to an hereafter — and intimates eternity to man.' But enough of these crude hints of what Chantrey might have done, but did *not* do, 'the germins' of things spilled before quickened. Pray forgive this rhapsody, which was begun on Friday, the 30th of December, but was broken off at the end of the former sheet, and at two sittings since, interrupted by vexatious occurrences that drew off attention, hastily concluded this afternoon, January 3rd, 1843. I have run myself into a corner at last, and have barely room to say

"I am truly your friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mrs. Gregory, Rock Gardens, Brighton."

# CHAP. XXXVII.

## 1811.

"WORLD BEFORE THE FLOOD."—ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE POEM. — TRANSMISSION OF THE MS. TO PARKEN. — ENLARGEMENT OF THE DESIGN RECOMMENDED AND ADOPTED. — OPINIONS OF VARIOUS FRIENDS.— POETICAL FICTION. — LETTER FROM SOUTHEY TO MONTGOMERY. — ROBERT MONTGOMERY.— EDITORSHIP AND CHARACTER OF THE "ECLECTIC REVIEW." — CRITICISM ANTICIPATED. — RELIGIOUS AND BENEVOLENT INSTITUTIONS. — MONTGOMERY'S GROWING INTEREST IN THEM.— BIBLE SOCIETY. — AGED FEMALES.— INFLUENCE OF PERSONAL RELIGION ON OFFICIAL DUTY. — LETTER FROM WALTER SCOTT. — TO WILLIAM ROSCOE. — THE "VALENTINE WREATH." — BIRTHDAY VERSES. — THE COMET. — LETTER TO ROBERT MONTGOMERY. — COMPLIMENTARY LINES TO MONTGOMERY.

THE reader will have perceived, from the letters to Roscoe and Gregory, that Montgomery had not only commenced the "World before the Flood," but that two cantos, at least, were written before the end of 1810. Of the origin and progress of this beautiful and generally admired poem, the author has given a succinct account in his collected works.

Entirely consonant with what he there states is the account which he had previously given to us in conversation, viz., that, during the delay of the publication of the "West Indies," and while in quest of a theme for a leading essay to form, with many minor pieces, a new volume, he happened one Sunday morning, before starting to his usual place of worship, to be meditating on the history of Enoch and his relation to the antedilu-

vians, as recorded in the fifth chapter of the book of Genesis, which we believe he had been reading; at the same time, a well-known passage in the eleventh book of "Paradise Lost," in which Milton applies the striking imagery connected with the Scripture account of the ascent of Elijah in a chariot of fire to the translation of Enoch, forcibly occurred to his recollection. This at once determined his choice. The passage alluded to occurs at the close of that affecting portion of the vision of futurity opened by Michael the Archangel to fallen Adam, which extends from line 660. to line 711.

To say that it is not very easy immediately to perceive by what principle of the law of mental association these lines in "Paradise Lost" should have suggested even the rudimental idea of the elaborate scriptural story of the "World before the Flood," is merely to record a fresh instance of the difficulty of accounting for the diversified operations of what is more often conveniently than demonstratively termed — Genius. True, however, it is, that, in the reading of a few verses in the Bible, and in the recollection of a few lines from Milton, somewhat more in number than those of a sonnet, Montgomery caught a momentary glimpse of antediluvian history — not as it is revealed to the geologist in the monster-museums of ancient rocks — but as perceived by the poet in "a large web of fiction, involving a small fact of Scripture:" and in the course of a few months, the plan thus suddenly conceived was diligently elaborated into a poem of four cantos. The copy was then despatched to Parken, with a request that, after having perused it himself, he would deliver it into the hands of Messrs. Longman and Co. for immediate publication. Accordingly, Parken not only read, but so much approved of the performance, as, in the words of the poet—

"To think it *worth* mending, and capable of being *greatly* mended, because the author had not done justice either to himself or the theme in so contracted a compass. Wherefore, with a courage and candour not often hazarded by one friend towards another, in an affair of peculiar delicacy, where the most jealous of personal feelings must of necessity be wounded, how tenderly soever the sensitive operation may be performed, he addressed a brief but earnest letter to his correspondent, imploring permission to detain the manuscript a few days longer, before he consigned it to the booksellers for the press, and till the author himself had given further consideration to the subject, with a view of bringing out its latent capabilities more effectually than had been attempted in the draft, or rather in the sketch which had been sent to him."

This, as Montgomery confessed, was "touching the apple of a poet's eye;" and for a moment his mind was exquisitely pained, not by the frankness, but by the bearing of his friend's advice. Having, however, calmly re-perused the letter, he started at once on a long meditative ramble amidst the beautiful scenery around Page Hall, about five miles north of Sheffield; and here, after a somewhat hard struggle with himself, the poet "determined not to be outdone by his adviser in magnanimity, but to give him in return a corresponding token of genuine friendship and confidence, by unreservedly bowing to his judgment and adopting his counsel."

Having come to this conclusion, the author resolved to take the opinion of four other literary friends, viz. Dr. Aikin, Dr. Gregory, Mr. Roscoe*, and Mr. Rees,

* Mr. Roscoe always preferred the original form of the work. He considered that it even then presented a grand poetical representation of the first ages of mankind—affording a wide scope for imagination; comprehending subjects of the highest importance to the human race, and taking a rapid glance at the destinies of

a brother of Longman's partner. To each of these gentlemen in succession was the manuscript submitted, and by each of them was it returned "with notes and comments freely and ingenuously expressed, but, of course, not altogether accordant." The work was now courageously broken up, and carefully and zealously remodelled, in conformity with the larger scope of illustration which had been so judiciously recommended. Alas! he to whose wise and friendly counsel this course was mainly owing, did not witness its accomplishment.

But Parken rendered another service to his friend, the object and nature of which will be apparent from the following letter:—

*Daniel Parken to James Montgomery.*

"Cloisters, Temple, June 15. 1811.

"MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

". . . . The other subject on which I was to have written to you by return of post was the doubt you seemed to entertain of the morality of fiction. It chagrined and alarmed me a good deal, to think of your mind or your conscience being perplexed on a point of such vital importance to your present pursuits. A friend of mine, who is

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mankind, from their destruction in the Flood to their final restoration under the Christian system. "Considered in this view," proceeds the friendly critic,—"and I own I see no reason to consider it in any other,—I think the plan well formed, and the arrangement of the different parts judicious. Whether there be perfect unity of time, place, and action, and whether, as you conjecture, that unity be a defect, I shall not pretend to decide; but the story is comprehensible, the narrative rapid, the characters forcible and novel; and upon the whole, the poem is calculated to excite, in a high degree, the interest of the reader. Of the brilliancy and clearness of the language, and the richness f poetical ornament, I say nothing, because these are your handmaids, and accompany you wherever you go."

also a friend of Southey's, so far from admitting any such notions as yours, contends that poetry, considered *as fiction*, is the finest species of ethics; and goes so far as to call religion the most perfect poetry, because it has all the glory of fiction, and all the reality of fact. He insists upon it that poetry, like the other fine arts, is chiefly beneficial, because it supplies nobler images, and a higher standard of excellence, to the imagination than nature can furnish to the senses; and elevates man to the loftiest pitch he is capable of attaining, by pointing him to that which is beyond his reach. However, this may be, I am sure there is no immorality inherent in fictions, as such, which *have no practical tendency contrary to fact.* I *hope* my metaphysics and morals are intelligible to you; I *think* they are to myself. In your poem, there is no intention to deceive: there is no probability that any person will be deceived: and if the whole world *were* to be deceived, not a single feeling would be excited or a single action performed which would not be sanctioned by enlarged views of our nature, or which would be in the smallest degree detrimental to the happiness of a single individual. If I wanted proofs, I would only cite the apologues and parables of Scripture, some of which, if not all, are unquestionably fictitious. The use of fiction in literature appears to me exactly analogous to the conception of quantities in mathematics, or, to come home to my own peculiar and favourite studies, to the statement of imaginary cases for the determination of points in law. Many cases may be imagined which probably never did occur in real life, but which might have occurred, may occur, and some time or other probably will. All the truth involved in the real case is equally involved in the imaginary one; and surely there is nothing very immoral or pernicious in getting instruction *before* an event actually takes place, which would be sound and salutary afterwards. If there is any objection to the use of fiction in connection with facts of sacred history, in a poetical work, it must rest upon the extraordinary power of fascination and illusion which the highest order of poetry possesses. The popular creed with respect

to the fall of man, the war of the angels, and the character of Satan, is probably derived at least as much from 'Paradise Lost' as from the book of Genesis or of Revelation. Happily there is but little variance between them; and as to what there is, a moment's reflection detects the illusion, and the Bible is always at hand to dispel it. May your poem do as much harm as Milton's in this way, and as much good by graving religious facts and principles on the public mind! The palm shall be then entwined with your bays, and you shall cast both at the feet of the Redeemer, shouting Hosanna!

"I am most affectionately yours,

"D. PARKEN.

"Mr. Montgomery, Sheffield."

Four cantos of the "World before the Flood," in its enlarged form, having been forwarded to Parken, he read them in a large party, including Mr. Conder, who, writing to Montgomery, says: — "Did I tell you that Southey expressed his regret at hearing you had chosen the heroic couplet,— the least adapted, as he maintains, for a long poem — and especially such a poem. Blank verse, without comparison, he recommended; and I am disposed to coincide with him." An appeal from this opinion, accompanied by a portion of the manuscript, was made by our poet to his distinguished contemporary, whose reply is less interesting for its concession on the point in question, than for the affecting insight which it affords of the feelings and opinions of the writer at an important period of his own personal history.

*Robert Southey to James Montgomery.*

"Keswick, May 6. 1811.

"MY DEAR MONTGOMERY,

"Your death of Adam is what it should be; and the apparition at the close brings with it all the comfort, and

light, and glory that is wanted. Eve's departure is admirably conceived. I did not expect it, because I was chained too much as I went along to expect anything; but the event follows so naturally, that it produced an effect like historical truth. I should never have objected to the couplet, if it had often been written as you write it—with that full and yet unwearying harmony, well varied, but never interrupted. There are but two expressions that struck me as blemishes: concerning the one, you will agree with me; about the other, perhaps you will not. The first is the epithet 'unreturning,' in the last line of the first paragraph: the other is 'this congenial side.' The direct reference to the rib is perfectly proper; and yet I wish the word 'breast' had been used instead of 'side.'

"No man who looks into his own heart when he is capable of understanding it, can doubt that there is a disease in human nature, for which the grace of God is the only remedy: with this belief, or rather with this *sense*, and this *conviction*, there can be no presumption in saying that I regard the first chapter of Genesis not as an historical narration, but an allegorical veil for this mystery—a mystery that has been unconsciously acknowledged among mankind, because it has been universally felt. If I understood the story literally, then I should read the line in the feeling with which you have written it: but that the formation of Eve is the only part of this very beautiful narrative which has not the solemnity of the rest, is apparent from the numberless light allusions to which it has given rise, from men who had no irreverent thought or intention.

"I have passed through many changes of belief, as is likely to be the case with every man of ardent mind who is not early gifted with humility. Gibbon shook my belief in Christianity when I was a school-boy of seventeen. When I went to college it was in the height of the French Revolution—and I drank deeply of that cup. I had a friend there whose name you have seen in my poems—Edmund Seward, an admirable man in all things, whose only fault was that he was too humble; for humble, even to a fault, he was.

In his company my religious interests were strengthened. But to those who have any religious feeling, you need not be told how chilling and withering the lip-service of a university must be. Sick of the college chapel and church, we tried the meeting-house; and there we were disgusted too. Seward left college meaning to take orders; I, who had the same destination, became a deist after he left us, and turned my thoughts to the profession of physic. Godwin's book fell into my hands: many of his doctrines appeared as monstrous to me then as they do now; but I became enamoured of a philosophical millenium. Coleridge came from Cambridge to visit a friend at Oxford on his way to a journey in Wales. That friend was my bosom companion: Coleridge was brought to my rooms—and that meeting fixed the future fortunes of us both.

"Coleridge had at that time thought little of politics; in morals he was as loose as men at a university usually are: but he was a Unitarian. My morals were of the sternest stoicism: that same feeling which made me a poet kept me pure—before I had used Werther and Rousseau for Epictetus. Our meeting was mutually agreeable; I reformed his life, and he disposed me towards Christianity, by showing me that none of the arguments that had led me to renounce it were applicable against the Socinian scheme. He remained three or four weeks at Oxford, and we planned an Utopia of our own, to be founded in the wilds of America upon the basis of common property—each labouring for all—a Pantisocracy—a republic of Reason and Virtue.

"For this dream I gave up every other prospect. How painfully and slowly I was awakened from it, this is not the time to say; for my purpose is but to show you where I have been upon my pilgrim's progress, and how far I have advanced upon the way. I became a Socinian from the reasonableness of the scheme; and still more so because I was shocked by the consequences of irreligion, such as they were seen in my daily intercourse with sceptics, unbelievers, and atheists. I reasoned on it till I learnt and felt how vain it is to build up a religion wholly upon historical

proofs. I learnt that religion could never be a living and quickening principle if we only assented to it as a mere act of the understanding. Something more was necessary—an operation of grace—a manifestation of the Spirit—an inward revelation—a recognition of revealed truth. This drew me towards Quakerism, yet with too clear a perception of the errors and follies of the Quakers to be wholly in union with them. In what has all this ended? you will ask.—That I am still what in old times was called a *seeker*—a sheep without a fold, but not without a shepherd; clinging to all that Christ has clearly taught, but shrinking from all attempts at defending, by articles of faith, those points which the gospels have left indefinite. I am of no visible church, but assuredly I feel myself in the communion of saints.

"Hence perhaps it is, that wherever I find love and faith and devotement, there I am, so far, in communion. I look to those points which we hold in common, and overlook the accidents that accompany these in the individual. Not that I am indifferent to the differences of belief; on the contrary, no man has a stronger conviction of the fatal consequences which result from the corruptions of Christianity. You have seen what I have said of the Inquisition: you may find more of my feelings upon the subject in the eighth number of the 'Quarterly,' upon the Evangelical Sects; and in the first, upon the Baptist Mission in India.

"Vanderkemp's history is in the first volume of the Transactions of the Missionary Society. I have both the works of Crantz, which you offer me; and also Laskiel. The first two volumes of the Moravian accounts I thought you might possibly have been able to procure for me, as the neighbourhood of Fulneck seemed to imply a Moravian population in that part of the country. The other volumes I possess: those I want were borrowed for me from Mr. Latrobe, and I have extracted from them the most material parts, especially those relating to Bavian's Kloof. The scene of Schmidt's house, and the remains of his mission in old Helen and her Bible,

are worthy subjects even for your pen.* I do not consider that you feel too strongly on these subjects. I have often said that, of all things in the world, nothing could give me so high a gratification as to find one of my own ancestors among Fox's Martyrs! nay, if I were to find one among the popish martyrs of Elizabeth or James, the feeling would be little abated. That beast Henry VIII. hauled papists and protestants to Smithfield upon the same hurdle: each thought the other worthy of death, and in the sure road to perdition; but I verily believe that both parties met that day in Paradise! Dear Montgomery, though you may think me a heretic, you will not rank this among *my heresies.* I would fain say something upon what I look upon as *yours* —implied in one mournful sentence. But when you speak of experience to your 'eternal and irreparable cost,' I hope and am assured that upon this point also there can be no radical difference between you and me, and that in a happier state of bodily health, you would not, and could not, have written these words. I long to see you and to talk with you of this world and of the next. When will you come to me? From Leeds there is a coach to Kendal; and from Kendal there is one here. By this letter you have more knowledge of my inner man than half the world would obtain in their whole lives; for I am one who shrinks in like a snail, when I find no sympathy—but when I do, opening myself like a flower to the morning sun. God bless you.

"Your affectionate friend,

"ROBERT SOUTHEY.

"Mr. Montgomery, Sheffield."

The following passage from a long letter addressed by the poet to his brother Robert, on the 7th of July, although relating to a mere family affair, is so indicative of the fraternal generosity and thoughtfulness of the writer, that we trust our readers will peruse it with as

* *Vide* "An African Valley." Prose by a Poet, ii. 266.

much pleasure as the transcription of it has afforded us. It was indeed a remarkable as well as a beautiful feature in the *secret* benevolence of Montgomery, that, with the least possible care about housekeeping on his own account, he always entered anxiously and generously into the *res angusta domi* of those who by accident as well as affinity became entitled to his assistance: —

"If your health requires, or your circumstances will permit, I should rejoice to see you again this year at Sheffield; and if you would bring Betsey or Harriet with you, your company would be rendered thrice welcome by such a precious addition to it. There is one thing lies very near my heart, dear Robert, and I will now mention it freely, knowing that you will justly estimate my motives, whether you comply with my recommendation or no. I fear that Betsey has not been so well instructed at the school which she was at near Woolwich, as I think she ought to have been. Would it not be right to avail yourself of the opportunity of our brother and sister, living at Ockbrook, to send Betsey to the school there, which is a very good one, and the terms are reasonable; but I press this upon your attention principally because the dear child would have the benefit of additional instruction from Agnes, who would be a very kind mother to her, and whose house would be a pleasant home for her. Besides this, she would hear and, I trust, learn much that concerns her eternal happiness, while she was improving her mind, and acquiring those humble accomplishments that are absolutely necessary to her future comfort and respectability in that modest rank of society, in which she will probably move hereafter. If the expense be the chief obstacle, I will pay any share of it, which you may find inconvenient to bear at present, and I know no way in which I should esteem my money laid out to better profit, if I perceived her 'growth in stature, and in knowledge, and in favour with God and man.' She might, on this plan, spend the Christmas-holidays with me at Sheffield,

and the Midsummer ones at Woolwich. I am sure her mother would be the first to acknowledge the excellence of my advice, after she had tried it a single half-year. My dear brother, I entreat you to think seriously of this, as you love your child, and desire her happiness now and hereafter."

The immediate removal of the Rev. Ignatius Montgomery to London prevented any chance of carrying out the proposed arrangement.

Dr. Styles, who, visited Parken at Lymington at the latter end of the summer of this year, says:—

"The genius of Montgomery, his heart of feeling, and his soul of fire, passed under review. The manuscript of the 'World before the Flood,' written according to the first conception of its author*, was in the possession of his friend; and without producing it, which would perhaps have been a breach of confidence, Parken descanted on its grandeur, its beauty, and, above all, its consecration to religion. Though he was going through it as a critic, and was determined to be sacredly just to its faults, and religiously careful of the reputation of its author, he did not betray the secret: that was reserved for the survivor to tell, which he has done with all the eloquence of gratitude and truth."†

Parken being now about to commence practice as a barrister on circuit, the editorship of the "Eclectic" was undertaken by Theodore Williams, a son of the Divinity tutor at the Dissenter's academy, near Rotherham; Montgomery being at the same time earnestly requested to continue his services.

In the January number he had reviewed, at some length, the "Poetical Works of Anna Seward," and the estimate there recorded of the talents and character

* It was a portion of the poem in its enlarged form.

† Early Blossoms, p. 222.

of the Lichfield poetess, is, we believe, on the whole, that which time has sanctioned. Speaking of that "fondness for fame," that "longing after immortality," which pertains especially to heroes and authors, the reviewer says:—

"The poets, we suppose, are by far the most sanguine of all the candidates for fame. Five hundred thousand millions of human beings have probably lived and died in this world since the creation. It would be idle to guess how many of these have been poets in their age, and expected to be poets through all succeeding generations. It is certain there is but one Homer—one Virgil—one Horace—one Shakspeare—one Milton—surviving in verse to this day; and these, with about three hundred names of secondary note, comprehend all the poets of all times and all countries, who are still partially or generally admired, and who have obtained even a part of their infinite wish for universal renown. It is not impossible to wish for what it is evidently impossible to obtain: but though the chance of five hundred thousand millions to one is *next* to impossible, yet since it is not *quite* impossible, and as there *is* one Homer—one Virgil—one Horace, in that number of human beings, there may be another, and '*I may be he!*' So reasons every poet in whose breast is once kindled the flame that burns for immortality—a flame that eclipses, involves, and outlives every other."*

In the October number† he reviewed, in a still more extended article, the six volumes of Miss Seward's "Letters," then recently published. The introductory paragraphs are of a pleasing, as well as appropriate cast; and they were, many years after their first appearance, transferred by the author to his Introductory Essay prefixed to the "Christian Correspondent."

It appears the "Eclectic" was found to be "a losing

* Eclectic Review, vol. vii. p. 20. † Ibid. p. 349.

concern;" yet the poet asserts that it was "inferior to no monthly review on the whole, and in some departments it was equal at least to the 'Quarterly,' and, except in malignant wit, yields not to the 'Edinburgh' itself on particular occasions.

"Have you," he asks Parken, "seen 'Reviewers Reviewed,' a pamphlet printed at Oxford, and published by Mr. Conder? I am therein dragged forth to public animadversion as a reviewer in the 'Eclectic' corps. Of this I am not ashamed, but I am afraid if you can distinguish between feelings so nearly alike in such a case. But, as a poet, occasionally appearing before the petty tribunal of every reviewer, I can easily foresee what those who hate my poetry may insinuate about my suspected treatment of contemporaries. I do not recollect any article, however, written by me, concerning any poetical rival,—for all living poets are rivals under circumstances that bring them into comparison with each other,—which I should hesitate to avow either in public or private, if it were necessary; but I dread *general* charges which never can be *particularly* confuted; and I have certainly seen some judgments in the 'E. R.,' in which I could not agree. This, after all, is vain murmuring; a consequence almost inevitable has at length ensued: I have been an occasional writer in the 'E. R.' for five years, and am now found out. I blame no one really entrusted with the secret, as circumstances out of the power of you or me, or any body concerned with us, necessarily developed it by degrees, till it was too notorious either to be betrayed or concealed."*

He then congratulates himself upon having escaped the fangs of the Edinburgh Reviewers in the "West Indies," but he anticipates their onslaught in the "World before the Flood."

* Letter to Parken, July 7. 1811.

"There, indeed," says he, "these giants must find me out, and war against me with all their might, or I may conclude my fame and my poem destined to speedy and inevitable oblivion,—for I consider their praise as entirely out of the question, and if the work has not merit enough to provoke their spleen, it will not have enough to attract any permanent admiration on the part of the public. I am endeavouring to make up my mind for the alternative of gradual success or utter failure. I feel so many difficulties in my own views of the subject, and so many imperfections in my execution of the plan, that these, added to the discouragements which have been cast in my way by others, have greatly humbled my hopes, though I believe they have quickened my exertions, and more than doubled my diligence in touching and retouching those passages that either please or provoke me the most."

These confidential disclosures of agonizing solicitude about such a work at such a crisis are deeply affecting; and they will probably strike with double force the minds of persons who are or have been similarly exercised; for, in this respect, assuredly, to adopt the words of Cowper—

> "They best can judge a poet's worth,
> Who oft themselves have known
> The pangs of a poetic birth
> By labours of their own."

But Montgomery felt himself amenable to a higher tribunal than that of human criticism for judgment on the "innocency or criminality" of *his* labour:—

"Anxious," says he, "miserably anxious, as I am for the praise of men, I pray that this work may either never be brought to a conclusion; or, if unhappily finished, may it fall still-born from the press, unless the effect of it be con-

sistent with the character of a Christian poet, calculated to promote the best interests of man, and redound to the glory of God."

We have now, as already intimated, reached the period a little before or after which several of those religious and benevolent institutions, which were destined to become so conspicuously useful in after years, either had their origin or were reinvigorated with fresh impulses. Of most of these societies, whether local or otherwise, Montgomery became a member or an advocate: and it was among the humble but pious managers of one of the humblest but most useful of them — the Methodist Religious Tract Society — that the poet was first led to take an active part in matters which afterwards supplied so largely subjects for his pen, and the topics of his platform addresses. We have repeatedly heard him advert, with deep feeling, to the little vestry in Norfolk Street Wesleyan Chapel, where he, along with a few poor, plain, but zealous men, used to be found early on a cold winter's morning; on the table a single halfpenny candle, that just served to make "darkness visible;"—their object being "the dispatch of business" of a religious nature, before the ordinary secular duties of the day commenced.

But if he had felt it his duty to join his fellow-worshippers in this most unpretending of evangelical schemes, the operation of which was confined mostly to the circulation of a few single leaves of religious knowledge in his own town and neighbourhood; how irrepressible must have been his emotions, on first finding himself, about the same time, in personal contact with the zealous agents of that noblest of modern institutions, the scope of which was to give the Holy Scriptures to every nation under heaven!

March 29th. About twelve hundred of the inhabitants of Sheffield assembled to meet the Revs. John Owen, Joseph Hughes, and Dr. Steinkopff, the secretaries of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Montgomery attended the meeting, not as a speaker, but, in common with many others, as an auditor, hardly knowing what to expect on such a novel occasion. At the close of a detailed account of the proceedings given in the "Iris," he says:—

"To confess the truth, we surrendered our feelings so entirely to the speakers on this delightful occasion, that we were perfectly passive to every momentary impression which they made in the course of their respective addresses; and it was not till long after the meeting was over, that we could so compose ourselves, as to endeavour to fix on our mind any definite idea of the pleasure which we had enjoyed, or recollect even the prominent features of the speeches which we had heard. We certainly never did witness such transcendent and contrasted abilities so well and so successfully employed. Yet, after all, what were the men, and what was their manner of speech, in comparison with the sublime and inspiring subject on which they exercised their talents! Let us give God the glory: it was the altar on which these gifts were laid that sanctified the gifts; and though we may not be able to heap such precious offerings there, yet to that altar let us bring what we have, though it be nothing but a broken heart and a contrite spirit. When the wise men from the East had opened their treasures, they presented the infant Saviour with gold, frankincense, and myrrh; yet was the simple homage of the shepherds at his manger-side not less accepted. Let each, let all of us, then, join hand and heart, however poor, however weak we may be, to forward the glorious work in which these our elder brethren are so pre-eminently engaged."

This advice, so earnestly given to others, was by himself practically exemplified: he immediately became,

and ever afterwards continued, an indefatigable advocate and supporter of the Bible Society. The "Aged Female Society," for the relief of widows and poor single women of sixty-five years of age and upwards, in the success of which Montgomery took a lively interest, was this year formed in Sheffield. And so far was the poet from ever afterwards becoming either indifferent to or ashamed of this usually neglected class of persons, that even when presenting himself to the circles of polite literature, in "Prose by a Poet," he devotes to them a chapter, under the homely title of "Old Women." In pleading the cause of these venerable claimants, we recollect that he once used the following ingenious simile in illustration of the ravages of Time on the ranks of both sexes:—

"A generation of men may be represented as inhabitants of a narrow shore, bounded, towards the interior, by mountains, which preclude the possibility of escaping beyond; and so steep, that, except in particular places (and there only to a small height), they cannot be scaled by the most adventurous feet. Over this beach the tide of time may be said to flow in an age, steadily advancing through all the lapse of threescore years and ten. Now, imagining a whole generation to come into being at once,—the crisis of birth is the lowest point to which the waters ebb, and the first at which they begin their ministration of death; for multitudes of infants disappear as soon as they have seen the light! Out of eternity they come, as by the impulse of a wave, and into eternity they are drawn back by its revulsion. In the few years which constitute childhood, one fifth of those that have passed through the perils encompassing the entrance into life, are swept away by the rising of this septuagenarian flood. In the progress of youth, and to the perfection of manhood at thirty years, one half of the remainder have already gone down beneath the deep, and the space for survivors is fearfully straitened, both in front and on

either hand. As the surge behind rolls onward, in greater and greater proportion to their numbers, are the fugitives overtaken and ingulphed, though continually shifting their habitations, like travellers striking their tents every morning, and pitching them further inland every evening, to avoid the pursuing destruction. At length, at seventy years, which may be called the high-water mark, we descry but a remnant of stragglers, here and there scattered and insulated from each other. These, having found strength to climb the barrier rocks, are seated on loose ledges, or hang by slight-rooted shrubs, and behold the tide swelling towards them, the wind roaring, and the stream beating vehemently at their feet, till they are either shaken from their seats, let go their hold from weariness, or, the crags being undermined, and the trees uptorn on which they depend, one by one they drop into the abyss beneath. A few, a very few, reach the cliff of a century, but these all likewise perish as inevitably as the rest, for death is only the more certain the longer it is escaped."

While the selection and execution of such a theme as the "World before the Flood" is sufficient to indicate the Scriptural bent of his genius, we have abundant evidence also, at this time, of the advance of his own mind in the knowledge, enjoyment, and advocacy of personal religion. In his newspaper especially was this fact strikingly, and to some persons distastefully, apparent; not only in the general bearing of his selected matter, and the prominence which he constantly gave to notices of local proceedings of a like character, but in the use which he often made of his editorial position to give a spiritual turn to his own remarks. Nor was he less ready to defend than to improve the social character of the population amidst which his lot had been cast. A disturbance having arisen in a public meeting about a proposed Police Act, the editor of the "Iris," after duly animadverting on the outbreak, said

that, after nineteen years' residence among them, he would "still continue to regard the humbler classes in Sheffield as being on the whole more decorous in their conduct, and better informed in their minds, than those of the same rank in any other manufacturing town in the kingdom."

*Walter Scott to James Montgomery.*

"Ashestiel, Aug. 8. 1811.

"SIR,

"I am favoured with a copy of your paper in which you have been so good as to insert an extract from a late poetical attempt of mine with a very flattering introduction.* I the more readily embrace the opportunity of returning thanks for your public attention that I have been long desirous of an opportunity of expressing the pleasure I have received from your own poetry, and the interest I have taken in it. I assure you, Sir, that having come late as a candidate into the literary world, and being somewhat philosophical respecting popular applause, I am doubly sensible of the value of the approbation of a man of talents, and that I am respectfully,

"Your obliged, humble servant,

"WALTER SCOTT.

"Mr. Montgomery, Sheffield."

* "Mr. Walter Scott, with a liberality which does honour to his feelings, has given the sum which he received for the copyright of a new poem to the unfortunate sufferers in Portugal, and the poem is no less honourable to his genius. The work is entitled the 'Vision of Don Roderick;' and our readers, we are sure, will be gratified by the following extract, which contains an elegant and, we trust, a just tribute to the respective character of the three nations which compose the British Empire, as well as a real and merited compliment to Lord Wellington:—

"'A various host — from kindred realms they come,'" &c.

*Iris*, Aug. 1.

*James Montgomery to William Roscoe.*

"Sheffield, Aug. 15. 1811.

"DEAR SIR,

"The season of the year reminds me that it is twelve months since I wrote to you, that I then asked a favour of you, which you immediately granted, and that it remains unacknowledged on my part to this hour. Surely you have set me down for what I am sure I am not, an ungrateful being; and though you are wrong, you are not unjust, if you have done so, for I confess that I must appear to be such in every eye that cannot see my heart. Forgive my neglect, I entreat you; neglect it has been, but nothing more, though it deserves in such a case a censure only less severe than unthankfulness itself. Accept now my sincere acknowledgments for your kind recommendation of Mr. Hofland as an Associate of your Liverpool Academy. I trust that neither his talents nor his character will be found unworthy of the honour you and your friends have conferred upon him. He is certainly an improving artist, and till he has arrived at the full stature of his genius, we will hope that he will yet raise his head far above the mob of painters, and rank among the few who are privileged by superiority of talents to be the nobles and the princes of their profession. This in a thousand instances must be a vain hope, even when indulged with respect to a young man of more than ordinary powers, and favoured with every auxiliary advantage: great painters, in the order of nature which cannot be broken, as well as great poets; and, indeed, great men in every walk of glory, must be like the stars of the first magnitude in the firmanent, *singly* scattered and *widely*, amidst inferior lustres, from those that almost rival them to those that faint from the eye in immeasurable distance. In what rank or constellation Mr. H. is destined to shine or be eclipsed, I cannot foresee. He has my best wishes, which will help him no more than if he had them not; they will not harm him, however, and that is an excellent quality of good wishes for others, which happily distinguishes them from

good wishes for ourselves; the latter, as I have bitterly known on many a fond occasion, being apt to recoil upon the breast that cherishes them, and wring it with regret and disappointment: for wishes warmly cherished grow into hopes, and hopes born of wishes necessarily die young, and leave desolate the nest that held them. Yet the succession of clouds in the hemisphere, assuming every form and hue of terror and loveliness, is not more constant than the course of wishes and hopes in the human heart, following and flying in endless diversity and perpetual migration; sometimes descending in storms that lay waste, or in rains that refresh it, but oftener passing beyond the horizon, or melting into air, and leaving as little remembrance of their existence behind, as real clouds leave impression of their shadows on the land that they have overcast in their progress through the air. Whither will this metaphor lead me? I am castle-building far above my height, and lest I fall I must descend. On turning to your last letter (dated Oct. 6th), I am much struck and pleased with the paragraph in which you mention by what sympathy you enjoyed my verses to the memory of M. S. (Mary Steevens, a Quaker female), and intimate that some such saint, in the hour of beatification, had blessed you too—if I guess rightly. Perhaps you will sometime give me more information on this subject, which, I confess, awakened both interest and curiosity in my breast at the time, and had I not expected from a hint at the end of the same letter that I should hear from you soon again (in which, however, I was deservedly disappointed), I believe I should have inquired long ago concerning the circumstance, whatever it might be, to which you alluded. But waiting for what never came, I neglected from week to week to thank you for what had come, till I grew confirmed in indolent procrastination, from which at length remorse, and shame, and fear of losing your friendship, have roused me.—Since I received back my manuscript of the 'World before the Flood' from you, the entire remodification of it has been the chief, I may say the only object of my poetical studies; they have been intense and incessant in those

hours that I could spare to them, amidst the hurry and cares of business, the languor of constitutional melancholy, and the occasional discouragements which I have experienced in my progress, both from the misgivings of my own mind, and the forebodings of some of my friends, who from the beginning augured my inevitable miscarriage, and who still, to support the credit of their own prescience, do their best to make me miscarry, by hinting their fears concerning my hopes. You will, perhaps, add one to the number of these, though not from precisely similar feelings; but I mean you will probably be one of those who doubt my prudence and quake for my success, when I tell you that I have so essentially altered the plan of this piece, that it will be at least twice the extent of the original, should I live to complete it. A poet seldom, perhaps never, improves upon a plot once deliberately formed and laboriously executed, when he breaks up the whole and remodels the materials with the addition of many others. Consequently, you will fear that my new poem, whatever may be its merits, will be inferior to the old one, whatever even its faults. I will endeavour to disprove this, not by argument but by fact, of which you will be the judge when my work is finished. Meanwhile it is only reasonable, nay it is imperatively just, that my friends should suspend their sentence of condemnation till the crime is committed for which they threaten it. You *will* do this; and whatever may be your doubts of my success, you will not assist to prevent it by expressing them harshly. It is impossible in a letter to communicate an outline of my projected alterations, and indeed, if I could I would not; my plan must be seen and judged in its execution, and not in the abstract; for it might appear good in the latter, and miserable in the former, as in the latter it might promise little, and in the former work miracles. I will only say, that on reconsideration of the original, and judging even by the most favourable impression it had made on my critical friends, I am convinced that too much, or rather too multifarious, matter was crowded into too small a space of time by the exhibition of scenes past, present, and to come, in a

poetic panorama; consequently, there was too much tumult of action, or too long digression, destroying the balance of feeling and intelligence of the subject throughout. I have, therefore, extended the time to three or four days, and relieved the various themes that ought to compose one harmonious whole by separating them further asunder, and exciting as far as possible a personal interest for those of the characters whom by expansion I have made the suffering heroes of the piece. I have written four cantos of nearly all new matter, introductory to the grand catastrophe which was the burthen of the former poem. I have much more yet to write, as well as to fashion from the old. This will employ me till the end of the year at least. I have no room to say more; but before the poem is complete, I hope both to write to you again, and to hear from you. With most grateful remembrance to your family,

"I am, truly, your obliged friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"William Roscoe, Esq., Liverpool."

Of occasional pieces, he wrote this year the "Valentine Wreath;"* and the lines entitled "A Daughter to her Mother on her Birth-day," already mentioned.

The latter months of 1811 were remarkable for the appearance of one of the largest comets which have been visible in modern times. Indeed, so brilliant did it ultimately become, that many persons not ordinarily superstitiously inclined, could not regard the extension of its luminous train across the heavens without a feeling of mysterious awe. Montgomery watched with intense interest, and, as usual, moralised the phenomenon.

"Nothing affects the imagination more than uncommon appearances in the heavens; the fall of a meteor strikes deeper awe than the spectacle of all the stars; and comets, from time immemorial, have been beheld with terror and

* Works, p. 349.

amazement, as the executioners of divine wrath. The poets have taken happy advantage of this superstition, and none have more nobly employed it than Milton: —

'On th' other side,
Incensed with indignation, Satan stood
Unterrified, and like a comet burned,
That fires the length of Ophiuchus huge
In th' arctic sky, and from his horrid hair
Shakes pestilence and war.' *Par. Lost.*

"The mysterious stranger that now shines 'in the arctic sky' has impressed our mind with very different feelings; we have gazed with delightful wonder on his sweet and tranquil aspect; and, instead of Satan, we would compare him to Raphael, 'sociably mild,' of whom the same poet, by the mouth of Adam, thus speaks, in language too exquisite for us to profane it by a parody to suit a temporary purpose:—

'Haste hither, Eve, and worth thy sight behold
Eastward, among those trees, what glorious shape
Comes this way moving; seems another morn
Risen on mid-noon; some great behest from heaven
To us perhaps he brings.'

"From the presence of such a messenger we need fear no evil; he brings the pleasantest weather we have experienced this year, and he comes to witness 'the joy of harvest' in our fields. Had man no calamities to dread but those which fall upon him from celestial influences, the golden age would soon return—or rather the Christian Millenium would be anticipated. . . . If we served God in our sphere, as these glorious but inanimate bodies serve him in theirs, we could feel no alarm at the sight of any prodigy; nay, we might lift up our heads with confidence, if the comet before us were commissioned to bring the Day of Judgment in its train, and if with it we saw 'the sign of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.'" —*Iris*, Sept. 10.

*James Montgomery to Robert Montgomery*

Sheffield, Dec. 13, 1811.

"My Dear Robert,

. . . "Many, many times have I lived over again in my thoughts the days of your last visit to Sheffield, during which I enjoyed more of your company than I had done at any period during the last twenty years, and, of consequence, I had more opportunity of looking into your heart, and observing its most secret and sacred emotions; not that I was a spy upon my brother's conduct, or laid a single snare to entrap him in his speech. No; I had no occasion to employ craft or stratagems of any kind to discover all that I wished to know, and all that I had a right to know, of your feelings, sentiments, and disposition. Whatever I found in you, my dear Robert, be assured that I loved and respected you more the more I became acquainted with you. On my part, I can conscientiously declare that I endeavoured to appear before you without any disguise either in my conduct or my conversation; in sincerity and truth I wished to be that, and that only, in your esteem, which my heart testified I was in reality, and which, I trust, I shall ever remain, your affectionate brother, and your friend indeed. . . . . Do write soon, and let me know fully and truly how you are; I am not afraid of your using deceit towards me on any other subject but this; I therefore charge you, as you love me, and more than this, as you love your family, that you always tell me candidly how you are affected in this most serious concern of the poor transitory life which you, as well as every son of Adam born to die, are leading in this vain world of trial and suffering, and danger and death. Here, too, let me entreat you to 'remember in this your day the things that belong to your peace;' and O may our Saviour never have cause to weep over you and me, as he once did over Jerusalem, and say that 'those things' which we rejected while they were offered to us, are 'for ever hidden from our eyes!' The feelings, deep and awful, which this reflection has awakened, naturally lead me to mention my visit to Ocbrook, about

the middle of October. I met Ignatius and Agnes at Matlock, where they had been a short time for the benefit of the waters, poor Ignatius being very weak, as, indeed, you saw when you called on him on your return. He looked pale and thin, but in other respects little changed since I saw him six years before. He was languid, but there was a meekness, a heavenly-mindedness in his manner and in his looks, that rendered him inexpressibly interesting to me. Agnes, whom I then saw for the first time since we were children at Fulneck, appeared much healthier and stronger than I expected. We were soon brother and sister, you may be sure, and I was charmed with her in every point of view in which I saw her at Matlock and at Ockbrook, as an affectionate helpmate to our dear infirm Ignatius, an excellent nurse both to him and John James, and a most worthy and accomplished woman. She is, in my esteem, a guardian angel, sent by the express command of Heaven to minister to poor Ignatius; and I will add, he is worthy of her; a kinder, humbler, nobler heart than his surely never warmed a human breast. As for John James, he is an armful of roses, and his very first smile made me love him from my soul, but he did not make me forget Betsey, or Harriet—*my* Betsey and *my* Harriet, I ought to say; no; he only reminded me more and more of them . . . .

. . . . . .

"I am, very truly,

"Your affectionate brother,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. Robert Montgomery, Woolwich."

The following rhyming epistle has no date; but it is so pleasant a specimen of the lively writer's skill, in a measure which at this time she adopted for an ingenious composition of some length*, while the compliments paid to the poet, with "a woman's delicacy,"

* "A Season at Harrogate."

are so just, that we venture to insert it here. The "Dial" mentioned in the first line, was written in 1807.*

*Mrs. Hofland to James Montgomery.*

"Harrogate.

"The Dial you send, is most beauteous I grant,
But it is not, my friend, just the dial I want;
Give me the light shadow that pointed your hours,
When life was a lawn all enamelled with flowers,
Where the pure stream of Fancy ran rapid and clear,
And fed the bright summer that bloomed thro' the year;
Give me youth's blushing roses, as painted by you,
When seen thro' a medium more lovely than true;
Ere the world's chilling frost on your bosom had played,
And involved its best wishes, best hopes, in a shade;
Obscured the sweet vision, romantic as bright,
And sunk the gay morning in premature night.
Those clouds are all vanished, but long must remain
The flow'rets of fancy drenched deep with their rain.
Tho' lovely, tho' fragrant, so sad, so deprest,
They harrow the bosom that loves them the best.
O man, all benignant! O Poet divine!
If the tears of thy Muse with such lustre can shine,
That the soul which has seen them once melt in her eye,
Finds its sweetest emotion in sympathy's sigh;
What bliss must that moment of rapture inspire,
When hope, love, and ecstacy waken the lyre?
And memory, to temper delirium sublime,
Throws round it the mellowing mantle of Time.
If e'er to the spirit of man there was given
This sacred illusion, this day-dream of Heaven,
It surely was thine; when, elastic as air,
Untouched by affliction, unfettered by care,
Unknown to the minions of malice and guile,
Unknown to the world, that can torture and smile;

* Works, p. 282.

In the lovely retreat where true Piety roves,
With Science her handmaid, thro' sanctified groves,
'T was thine the first breezes of morn to inhale,
And sweep the first dew-drops that spangle the vale,
Pierce thro' the deep thicket and seek the green glade,
Where tranquil solemnity dwelt in the shade.
What then were thy feelings, O exquisite boy?
When rapt with devotion, when trembling with joy,
From the light blade of grass just impearled by the dawn,
To the radiant archangel by seraphim drawn,
All earth and all heaven to thy view were unclosed,
And futurity's bard on religion reposed;
While thrilling with transport, while kindling with fire,
Drank deep of her spirit, and hallowed the lyre;
Thou only canst sing this aurora of youth,
The halo of Genius!—the day star of Truth!
Canst wake that fine sense so transcendently dear,
When speechless delight is expressed by a tear. . . .

"B. H."

# CHAP. XXXVIII.

## 1812.

LETTER FROM SOUTHEY. — FROM ROSCOE AND MONTGOMERY. — PROVINCIAL DISTURBANCES. — EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITIES. — POLITICAL SPIES. — RIOTING IN SHEFFIELD. — MONTGOMERY IN A MOB. — LETTER FROM SOUTHEY. — IGNATIUS MONTGOMERY AND HIS FAMILY. — THE POET IN THE METROPOLIS. — MAY MEETINGS. — LECTURES BY CAMPBELL AND COLERIDGE. — MISS BENGER. — CONVERSATION. — EXHIBITION OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY. — CHANTREY. — "ODE ON EDUCATION." — THE "MEDITERRANEAN." — SONNET FROM PETRARCH.

THE poet in his study, recasting his story of the "World before the Flood" — the politician, compelled to listen to the sounds of party strife, and to be made acquainted with the scenes and sources of social distress — the Christian believer, exercised by spiritual conflicts, which "to be known, must be felt," are the three characters in which Montgomery entered upon "the battle of life" this year. But amidst all this, there came pleasant voices and welcome letters of genuine friendship; seldom unsympathising, and happily not often sad.

*Robert Southey to James Montgomery.*

"Keswick, Jan. 2. 1812.

"MY DEAR MONTGOMERY,

"You talk of yourself and of me in terms of comparison upon which I must not comment, lest you should

be as much pained by the comment as I am by the text. Let that pass. If I had not admired your poetry, and felt it, and loved it, and loved you for its sake, I should not so often have thought of you, and spoken of you, and determined to see you, nor have broken through the belt of ice at last.

"You wish me a sounder frame, both of body and mind, than your own. My body, God be thanked! is as convenient a tenement as its occupier could desire. When you see me you will fancy me far advanced in consumption, so little is there of it; but there has never been more: and though it is by no means unlikely (from family predisposition) that this may be my appointed end, it is not at all the more likely because of my lean and hungry appearance. I am in far more danger of nervous diseases, from which nothing but perpetual self-management, and the fortunate circumstances of my life and disposition, preserve me. Nature gave me an indefatigable activity of mind, and a buoyancy of spirit which has ever enabled me to think little of difficulties, and to live in the light of hope; these gifts, too, were accompanied with an hilarity which has enabled me to retain a boy's heart to the age of eight-and-thirty: but my senses are perilously acute—impressions sink into me too deeply: and at one time ideas had all the vividness and apparent reality of actual impressions to such a degree, that I believe a speedy removal to a foreign country, bringing with it a total change of all external objects, saved me from imminent danger. The remedy, or, at least, the prevention, of this is variety of employment; and that it is that has made me the various writer that I am, even more than the necessity of pursuing the gainful paths of literature. If I fix my attention, morning and evening, upon one subject, and if my latest evening studies are of a kind to interest me deeply, my rest is disturbed and broken; and those bodily derangements ensue that indicate great nervous susceptibility. Experience having taught me this, I fly from one thing to another, each new train of thought neutralising, as it were, the last; and thus in general

maintain the balance so steadily, that I lie down at night with a mind as tranquil as an infant's.

"That I am a very happy man I owe to my early marriage. When little more than one-and-twenty, I married under circumstances as singular as they well could be — and, to all appearances, as improvident; but from that hour to this, I have had reason to bless the day. The main source of disquietude was thus at once cut off; I had done with hope and fear upon the most agitating and most important action of life, and my heart was at rest. Several years elapsed before I became a father; and then the keenest sorrow which I ever endured was for the loss of an only child, twelve months old. Since that event I have had five children, most of whom have been taken from me. Of all sorrows these are the most poignant; but I am the better for them, and never pour out my soul in prayer without acknowledging that these dispensations have drawn me nearer to God.

"But I will not pursue this strain too far. The progress of my mind through many changes and mazes of opinion, you shall know hereafter; and the up-hill work which I have had in the world — up-hill, indeed, but by a path of my own choosing, and always with the conviction that I was gaining the ascent, as well as toiling for it. Something I must say, while there is yet room for it, concerning the 'World before the Flood.' You say that you are about to begin it again: before you do this, reconsider during one half-hour,— what doubtless you have considered long ago,— whether it would not be better to make the Flood itself the termination of the poem, which would render no other alteration of the story [necessary], as far as I understand it, than that of relating the assumption of Enoch in the person of a narrator instead of your own. It seems to me you would gain a grandeur and even a unity beyond what your present design affords. My intention was to assume Burnett's theory [of the Deluge], a book almost unequalled for its power of imagination, and to have connected Whiston's with it. I have conceived a youth, the bosom friend of Japhet,

perfectly convinced by Noah, but refusing to flee from the wrath to come, because the maid whom he loved (though herself convinced also) will not forsake her parents. Their death, followed by their immediate beatitude, would have made an impressive scene. The outstanding figure of the anti-Anakim or Jacobinical party (for I had the parallel strongly in my mind) was a man with the best feelings and the best intentions; but erring in this — that he lived without God in the world; that he trusted in his own strength; and, provided he were likely to attain his end, was regardless of the means. He, after a St Bartholomew massacre of all his party, was to have burnt (* * * ?) a sacrifice to the god-tyrant. The great temple-palace was to have been some Tower-of-Babel edifice, built in despite of prophecy, and as if defying the vengeance that was denounced. It would have resisted the weight of the waters of the Flood, and have overstood all things, till (following Burnett's sublime vision) the shell of the earth gave way. You have here all that is worth remembering of a plan which never went farther than this. If any part of it could serve you as a hint, believe me, Montgomery, I should feel glad at having contributed one unhewn stone to your building. God bless you.

"Your affectionate friend,

"ROBERT SOUTHEY.

"Mr. James Montgomery, Sheffield."

*William Roscoe to James Montgomery.*

"Allerton, Jan. 2. 1812.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I have been quite shocked on seeing the 'World before the Flood' advertised, as being in a state of forwardness, by the booksellers, at the end of the 'Edinburgh Review.' Is it possible that my very culpable neglect in not replying to your last kind letter can have deprived me of the opportunity of seeing it in its improved state before it appears in public? I assure you, most feelingly, that this will give me the greatest concern — not that I conceive that any suggestions of mine can be of the least service — but

because I shall be deprived of a high gratification, and perhaps lead you into an opinion that I am indifferent to the fate of a work of which I have the highest opinion, as far as I was favoured with a perusal. You were so good as to say that I should probably hear from you again before the publication, but as this was coupled with an unperformed contingency, that *I* should write in the mean time, I cannot pervert it into a breach of promise. I presume from the circumstances to which I have referred, that the work is already at press, and that I shall not get a sight of it till published. If this be the case, allow me at least the satisfaction of thinking that my silence has not been attributed to a wrong cause, or that I could be supposed for a moment to cease to be solicitous either for your favourable opinion, or the success of your productions. I believe I might have as good a right as most others to allege excuses of business, &c., but the truth is, that a procrastinating disposition, and an unconquerable reluctance to take up a pen when I once get it out of my fingers, are the principal causes of my offence, and the great plagues of my life.

"Could not this inconvenience in some degree be remedied, and could we not contrive to have an interview, when more can be said in an hour than can be written in a week? When my son William had the pleasure of seeing you at Sheffield, he formed some expectation that you might be induced to visit this part of the country. Let me then inform you that I have lately enlarged my house, and that I can accommodate a friend; and that I know no one whom it would give me greater pleasure to see under my roof than yourself, where you shall be your own master, and divide your time between town and country, reading and exercise, as you wish. No time can be inconvenient, if I have only a day or two's notice to be in the way; and I shall only add, that the sooner it takes place, the more agreeable it will be to,

"My dear Sir,

"Your ever faithful friend,

"W. ROSCOE.

"Mr. James Montgomery, Sheffield."

*James Montgomery to William Roscoe.*

"Sheffield, Jan. 17. 1812.

"DEAR SIR,

"I do not know whether I was more pleased or sorry at the concern which you express in your last kind letter, lest I should have prepared my long poem for the public, without again laying it before you in manuscript. But I should, indeed, have been grieved, if your apprehension had been well-founded, and I had forfeited your confidence by not giving you mine, when it was most due, and where I might expect to be essentially benefited by your candid but indulgent criticisms. I will tell you the truth. You were the last friend to whom I communicated the poem in its original state. When I received it back from you, I laid it aside, with all the comments which had been made upon it, for several months, and, indeed, shut it as much as possible out of my thoughts; my mind was wearied of the subject; I had looked upon it, as one may look upon the sun, till it becomes darkness, and the eye turns for refreshment to green fields. Glorious as it had appeared to me at first, at length it either lost its lustre or I my sight with gazing at it. Indeed, I was dissatisfied with my own execution of the poem, and disheartened, almost to despair, by the strictures which had been passed upon it by some of my best friends. You and Dr. Aikin were by far the most favourable in your judgments, and I attribute none of my misery on this occasion to either of you; at the same time I do not mean to arraign the severer sentences of my other friends, but they told me with more boldness of the faults of my poem, and almost persuaded me that it was worthless, or my mind powerless, for I could not for a very long time conceive any way to render the plan more interesting, without which they convinced me it was impossible to please the public with such a piece. While I was meditating the renovation of it, Longman and Co. wrote to me to say that they were preparing a list of works for publication, and they wished my name to appear with an announcement of my poem that I might have in hand. This was in autumn

1810. I gave them the title of the 'World before the Flood,' but told them it certainly would not be ready for the press in less than twelve months. It was, however, announced, most prematurely, as I now find, for the poem, though again announced after the interval of a year, is not likely to be fit for publication before next Christmas, at the earliest. Towards the latter end of 1810, having new-cast the form of my piece, I began to work upon it with considerable spirit, and continued diligently at my task till June last; when, having finished four cantos, the greater part of which was original matter, I sent the manuscript to my severest critic, who is at the same time one of the sincerest and warmest of my friends. He kept the copy till November, and then returned it with such a terrifying string of remarks attached to it, that I was ready to commit both the poem and the comment to the flames, when I found I had been labouring eighteen months almost in vain. I laid them out of my sight for a month, and then with a trembling hand began to trace the poem line by line over again, altering, if not amending, wherever he had found fault, but pertinaciously adhering to my own plan. I have nearly gone through these four first cantos; I had written a fifth, which my Aristarchus had not seen, being composed in the interval while he had the others in his Inquisition chambers. This *is* the *statu quo* of the 'World before the Flood,' but if I have health and a sound mind, I mean to execute my plan in my own way now; and, availing myself of all the *critiques* which lie by me on the poem in its original state, I will not be diverted by any future interference of friends till I have completely gone through the task which I have set to myself. Then, indeed, I trust I shall be as willing as a poet ought to be, to hear the opinions of those whom he esteems, in order to form his *own*, concerning the merit and probable success of his work. If I have any opportunity, in the course of the summer, of safely conveying to you any considerable portion of the poem in its progress, I will most gladly avail myself of it, and thankfully receive your remarks and advice. But till I have two copies of the MS., I dare not

again trust it to a coach-office entry, for I was held in miserable suspense when I sent the four first cantos to my friend above-mentioned, who lives in London, and who left it just at the time my precious packet arrived, and did not acknowledge the receipt of it for several weeks. I had no transcript, and a very imperfect remembrance of upwards of eleven hundred lines, the scanty painful fruit of eight months' labour. Should I be enabled (though at present I see no prospect of it), to accept of your very kind invitation this year, to pay a visit to Liverpool, you shall see all I may have at the time, and we will discuss freely every part of it, if you are not already sick of the subject from this tiresome detail of circumstances sadly interesting to me, but of little importance to anybody else. I have been thus particular, not to indulge the petulance or the vanity of my own feelings, but from sincere respect to you, and an anxious desire to convince you that I have not wilfully either slighted or neglected one to whom I am so truly and gratefully indebted. Since I last wrote to you I have had an unexpected opportunity of opening a friendly correspondence with Mr. Southey; a man whom I now feel as much disposed to love for his own sake, as I before admired him for his incomparable talents. I am thus suddenly reminded of this rich acquisition to my few but valuable friendships with eminent as well as excellent men, by having just received a frank, enclosing a transcript of the first canto of his new poem, 'Pelayo,' which he had previously promised me. He, it seems, is not afraid to submit his unpublished poems to the test of confidential criticism, which I have found of all criticism the most difficult to meet; because there is so much delicacy and respect due to the persons exercising it, that whatever be the honest judgment of a poet's own mind (which, after all, he is bound to abide by, no less in justice to the public than to himself), when he differs from their decisions (and their decisions are often contradictory), he appears to do so from self-will or self-love, and he is gravely told, that a poet is the most incompetent judge of his own works. This I do positively deny, and I

affirm on the contrary, that that man, whom all allow to *be* a poet, is the best individual judge of his own productions, though unquestionably the true worth of them can only be ascertained by the general estimation in which they are held by others who are qualified, each for himself but no one for the public, to judge of them. I have hastily, but earnestly, read over Mr. S.'s canto of 'Pelayo,' and the first impression on my mind concerning it is, that after the general opening, which did not strike me particularly, the remainder constitutes the most awakening introduction to a story that I have met with in modern poetry. I have always considered Southey to stand foremost and alone—for the second is far behind him—of his contemporaries. *I* find a thousand faults in him, and perhaps there may be half that number fairly chargeable upon his poetry, but they are faults of style and manner—wilful faults, and therefore incorrigible ones; yet I delight in him beyond any one of his brethren, because I am more in his power—he carries me whither he pleases with an ease and a velocity so deeply transporting, that it seems less the force of another mind than the spontaneous impulse of my own that bears me along. Should next summer be a fortnight longer than from my present foresight and the tables of the almanack it is likely to be, I will certainly endeavour to employ it well, by making an excursion that shall include both Liverpool and Keswick; a few days spent at each would be such a refreshment as my mind, sick of its solitary meditations, and weary of the imperfect and laborious communication of a few of its thoughts in letters, greatly needs to quicken and warm it on these subjects, the very interest of which overwhelms and enchants in loneliness,—for I have almost no literary society here; and amidst the vexations of business, troubles of heart known only to myself, and, indeed, incommunicable to others, together with exercises both of my understanding and my feelings on subjects the most awful and important,—amidst these trials and occupations, occasional literary discourse with superior men would be a great enjoyment to me, who have little relish for the plea-

sures of dissipation, or even of innocent and healthful sports and pastimes. When you favour me with another letter, will you say when you heard last of Mr. Carey, the poet and artist, who has cast me off for more than two years, without assigning any cause for a silence that distresses me, principally because I fear I have unwittingly offended him. Even if I knew where he was, I should not intrude myself upon him, but I shall always be glad to hear that he is well, and that he is doing well. With best remembrance to your family,

"I remain your obliged friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Wm. Roscoe, Esq., Allerton Hall, near Liverpool."

It is difficult, if not impossible, for the generation that has been born and has grown up within the last thirty or forty years, fully to conceive the state of the population in the large manufacturing towns for some time previous to the peace of 1814. In 1812, especially, the operation of the "Orders in Council" contributed, by closing the mercantile intercourse with the United States, to render the continuance of the continental war in a tenfold degree disastrous to Sheffield. In discussing, reprobating, and finally obtaining the removal of this "suicidal" decree, the editor of the "Iris" heartily seconded the efforts of his fellow-townsmen. Meanwhile, with hundreds of artisans out of employment, or only employed in a manner that reminded them of the labour and degradation of convicts,— with flour at five shillings per stone, the fearful outrages of the "Luddites" going on in the weaving districts, and the excessive local poor-rate requiring to be supplemented by a voluntary subscription of upwards of eighteen hundred pounds,— it was hardly to be wondered at when the fact of secret noc-

turnal meetings of hungry and excited desperadoes came to light, or that some rioting took place in Sheffield. In fact, not only were several provision shops sacked, but the dépôt of the local militia was broken open, and thirty stand of arms, with some other military stores, destroyed.

At this fearful crisis, the prudence and firmness of the editor of the "Iris" were severely tried; not so much by the consideration of what he felt it his duty to himself and his readers to say in his columns, as with regard to the intervention of correspondents, who, having no direct responsibility there, were anxious to discuss passing events with the feelings which passion or interest inspired.

Montgomery felt, indeed, that his conscientiousness exposed him to the payment of a double penalty; for while, on the one hand, he was railed at, not to say threatened, for refusing to foment the prevailing spirit of sedition which was at this time abroad; on the other hand, he was alarmed and disgusted with the conviction which was forced upon his mind, that government mercenaries were actually instigating men to crimes of which they meant to accuse them before the public prosecutor. In the "Life of Lord Sidmouth,"* various palliatives of this ambiguous policy are offered by the biographer; and as the case is now viewed in the light of its political success, not altogether, perhaps, without effect. At the same time, the employment of spies is, at the best, so dangerous—so repugnant to the common notions of English liberty—and the agents of such a system must always be so universally odious, that no justification of the act—if such be possible—ever seems to comprehend the actors themselves. Mont-

* Published, 1847.

gomery, it is true, was a Whig—but loyal, peace-loving, and conciliatory, as many persons thought, in an excessive degree—and exactly such, in all respects, was his friend, Hugh Parker, Esq., the magistrate. Now the reader must imagine, if he can, the effect of the following disclosure on the judgment and feelings of the editor of the "Iris," and his friend on the bench. In the neighbourhood of Sheffield, as well as in other places, it was known to the local authorities, not only that nocturnal meetings of disaffected individuals were held, at which something like military drilling took place, but that a mysterious stranger was usually present, taking an active, and, as was alleged, a directive part in the proceedings. Mr. Parker, as became him, in his responsible situation, wrote to inform the Home Secretary of the state of the locality, and take his advice. But what was his horror, to be officially told in reply, that the suspected stranger was a government agent, actually doing his duty.* He turned out, in fact, to be one of those wretches who presently acquired such an infamous celebrity in the brief annals of espionage in England. The atrocity of this proceeding was aggravated, in Montgomery's estimation, by the belief that some of these illegal meetings were held just within the verge of the estate of a well-known indi-

* In fact, Lord Sidmouth's reply was in these words, "He is my man (or our man), and you may trust him." There is, after all, a wide difference between the assertion of Lord Sidmouth's biographer, "that it is not probable" the spies "in any instance instigated the conspirators to crime, in order to betray them;" and the allegation of the "Leeds Mercury," as read before the House of Commons, on the 16th of June 1817, to the effect that "the whole series of plots had been got up under the direction of an agent from London." Did the minister of the crown believe it *possible* for a *stranger* to mix himself up with these seditious movements without aggravating them?

vidual, who, although quite innocent of all connection with the proceedings, was, no doubt, intended to be compromised in the designs of the informer.

Those who may have personally known Montgomery, at whatever period of his life, will not need to be told, that of all men living he had the greatest repugnance to getting into a crowd: indeed, so delicate and feeble was he at this period, that "a straw upon the stream" might not inaptly represent him, if he chanced to get into such a predicament. Nevertheless, that he was not without personal as well as moral intrepidity, an incident which occurred during one of the riots to which we have alluded will sufficiently show. Flour having actually, at one moment, risen to *six shillings and four pence a stone*, and potatoes being dear in proportion, a mob was collected, the leading actors directing their vengeance against certain provision stores. A place of this description in the Hartshead was attacked, and the rabble, after throwing about the contents of the cellar, were proceeding somewhat roughly to handle the owner, who was attempting to save her property. Montgomery witnessed the proceedings from his window; and not being the man indifferently to stand by and see any woman in danger, he sallied forth into the thick of the mob, and spiritedly, but kindly, remonstrating with them on the impropriety of their conduct, brought the frightened huckster away in safety. He had hardly regained the house, when a potatoe, thrown by chance, broke a pane of glass in the window; and fearing lest there might be some attempt at further mischief, he again encountered the multitude outside, venturing to exhort them to order. While in this unpleasant situation, and beginning to find himself somewhat roughly hustled, a voice from the crowd exclaimed, "*Mester! Mester! get yo in — they 'll mully-crush yo else!*"—"*Nay, nay,*

*sir*," replied another, "*we won't hurt* YOU—*you were* ONCE *our friend!*"—But it is grateful to turn from these scenes.

*Robert Southey to James Montgomery.*

"Keswick, March 26. 1812.

"MY DEAR MONTGOMERY,

"So we have lost Vanderkemp. I am far from sympathising with the directors of the Missionary Society in all their opinions and feelings; but I feel the whole heroism of such a man as much as they can do,—and would to God that statesmen could see the importance of such men as clearly as I do! That souls which have never heard of redemption may nevertheless be saved I certainly believe; and God forbid that I should ever blaspheme Him by thinking otherwise: but I am equally certain that savage and barbarous nations can be reclaimed by nothing but Christianity. In thinking of the merits of a missionary, therefore, I never consider his creed,—a martyr in Japan is not less to me an object of admiration than a martyr in Smithfield, though I do not owe him the same gratitude: I could kiss the ground upon which Xavier or Nabrege have trod as zealously as the most bigoted Jesuit; I hold Egede in as much veneration as if I were a Moravian; and could not take a deeper interest in the proceedings of the society at Serampore, if I had been dipped in Andrew Fuller's baptistery. This is not from indifferentism; it is because one principle is common to all these men, and that principle is the light and life of the world. God knows I am no indifferentist: I am for tests and establishments, and would rather see our own church revoke some of her concessions, than yield a foot more either to popery over which she has trampled, or to puritanism, which by a coalition as monstrous as any of Mr. Fox's, is at this time leagued with popery, infidelity, and misbelief of every kind, in the hope of pulling her down.

"Vanderkemp was, in many respects, the most interesting character among all the missionaries. The state of his mind before his conversion shows a heart perpetually struggling

against the doubts which perplexed his faith, and the sophisms in which he had bewildered his understanding. His conversion manifestly took place in a moment of delirium produced by the dreadful calamity that had befallen him — but never was there a happier delusion. It led him to the only source of comfort; and the impression continued through life. I am not surprised at finding him venture to use his interest with heaven to procure rain for the Caffirs: it rather surprises me that under such an impression he did not attempt to work more miracles, and, as the Catholic missionaries in many instances undoubtedly have done, actually work them.

"This leads me to ask you if it be possible to purchase the first old volumes of the Moravian periodical accounts in your part of the country, where they have their head-quarters: for I am very desirous of possessing them. Mr. Latrobe's copy was borrowed for me once; but it is a book which I want to have at hand. Whenever time will permit me, I purpose giving a view of all the existing missions in the 'Quarterly,' showing the policy as well as the duty of these efforts.

"Thank you for your comments on 'Kehama.' The best reply I can make to what you say of the line — 'Never should she behold her father more,' is to say that it is altered upon your suggestion. You say Kailyal *is* a Christian, — is it not because the poem, supposing the truth of the mythology on which it is built, requires from her faith and resignation? I know not how it was that in my youth the mythologies and superstitions of various nations laid strong hold on my imagination and struck deep root in it; so that before I was twenty, one of my numerous plans was that of exhibiting the most striking fiction of each in a long poem. Thalaba and Kehama are the fruits of that early plan. Madoc partakes of it, but only incidentally. If I had gained money as well as reputation by these poems, the whole series would ere this have been completed. Do not misunderstand me — when I talk of gaining money, nothing more is meant than supporting myself by my labours; and the literal truth is, that

for many years I did not write a line of poetry, because I could not afford it! 'Kehama' was written before breakfast in hours borrowed from sleep; and so is 'Pelayo,' as far as it has yet proceeded. The world is brightening upon me now. I get well paid for prose; and yet even in this the capricious humour of the times is apparent. Some of the best years of my life have been devoted to the 'History of Portugal and its Dependencies,' in a series of works of which only one volume is yet before the public, but upon which as much labour and scrupulous research has been bestowed as ever was or will be given to historical compilation. These works will scarcely, while I live, pay for their own materials; whereas I might be employed, if I chose, from morning till night in reviewing the productions of Messrs. Tag, Rag, and Bobtail, at ten guineas per sheet.

"From the age of eight, my heart was set upon poetry, a passion owing, in the first instance, to Shakspeare, and which would have taken a dramatic turn, if it had not soon been diverted by our execrable modern versions of Tasso and Ariosto, and then fixt by Spenser, for whom I have as entire a love as you can have — and if you had not loved him as I do you would not have spoken of Una. No writer has ever given me such hours and days of intense delight as Spenser. Before I was fifteen I had resolved to finish the 'Faërie Queene.' Three cantos of the intended continuation was part of a huge pile which some years ago I committed to the flames. I rather regret that the memoranda for this notable undertaking were destroyed also, for, young as I was, they were a good deal in the spirit of Spenser; and I had in the course of repeated perusals gathered together every hint which can be found throughout the whole six books, that affords the least intimation of what the author designed to do in the other half. Nothing that I have done ever gave me so much delight as the dream of what I intended to do. I lived in a fairy land with Timias and Belphœbe, and Prince Arthur, and the Satrap man, and young Tristram, and Sir Sophy, and Arthegal who won Achilles' arms. Time has produced little change in my feelings of poetry; but it has

left me little feeling to spare for it. I have learnt to prefer that calmer pleasure which is to be found in historical pursuits, which seldom excites any passion, but when it does, excites it with all the impressions of truth. My expectations are as ardent about the 'History of Portugal' as ever they were about 'Joan of Arc,' and on far better grounds. Then the creatures of my own imagination delighted and deceived me: as a historian I may be deceived concerning my own power; but knowing what the duties of a historian are, those duties I know I have performed.

"Dear Montgomery, you say you wrote of nothing but yourself; only look back upon the great I's which I have sent you in return. I have always said that we English are the honestest people in the world, because we are the only people who always write that important word with a capital letter, as if to show every man's sense of its consequence. I long to see your antediluvian work. Do not talk to me of Alfred,—for I am engaged three subjects deep after Pelayo, and Heaven knows when that will be completed. The next in order is Philip's war in New England, with a primitive Quaker for the hero.

"Farewell. Yours most truly,

"R. SOUTHEY.

"Mr. James Montgomery, Sheffield."

In the spring Montgomery went to London; a particular attraction to him being what are emphatically termed the "May Meetings." He was domiciled with his brother Ignatius, at this period a minister of the Moravian congregation in Fetter Lane, and of whose household we get a pleasing glimpse in the following passage of a long and friendly letter from Parken to the poet, dated Jan. 7th:—

"In the circle of your brother's family, I seem transported out of the bustling and wicked world, and not only find pleasure in their agreeable conversation, but even in their

silence. We are all great admirers of Mrs. Montgomery in particular, and of your promising nephew, John James, who, if he imbibes the spirit of the maternal lessons he enjoys, ought to grow up the most affectionate and eloquent of men. Your brother's unaffected good sense and piety, together with the cultivated mind, the animated expression, and gay serenity of Henry Steinhauer, make the hours I spend in their society some of the most gratifying I ever enjoy. Oh! that you had an Agnes such as this real one is, or your fancied one ought to be."

It was during this visit that Montgomery attended for the first and only time the anniversary of the Bible Society, and of several other religious and benevolent institutions in the metropolis. He never lost the impression which was made on his mind and feelings by the proceedings: and three years afterwards, when attending the public meeting of the Sheffield Sunday School Union, in Queen Street Chapel, Sheffield, he recurred to the subject with evident delight:—

"Though the Sunday School Union in Sheffield," said he, in addressing the Chairman, "was projected in this place, we may trace its origin to the previous establishment of similar societies in various other neighbourhoods, but more immediately, as you have told us, to the existence and example of a Sunday School Union in London, from which, as from one dispensation of Providence, other dispensations of kindred influence and effect have been appointed to emanate through the country. London may indeed be the metropolis of vice, but it is the metropolis of virtue also. If sin abounds there, more than elsewhere, grace likewise abounds there more, and is thence universally diffused through the nation. The fact is plain; in London the masses of good and evil are so condensed and contrasted, that when we contemplate both torether, we are appalled at the enormous disproportion; if we look at the evil separately, we tremble lest fire from

heaven should suddenly come down and consume the city more guilty than Sodom or Gomorrah; yet when we turn to behold the good that is there, we might hope that London would be permitted to stand for ever, for the sake of the righteous who dwell in it. Every lover of nature, and of the God of nature in his visible works, prefers the country to the town. Of all the months, the month of May—and such a May as smiles and blooms around us now—of all the months the month of May is justly celebrated by the poet as being,

'If not the first, the fairest of the year.'

"At this enchanting season, when an invisible hand is awakening the woods, and shaking the trees into foliage,—when an invisible foot is walking the plains and the valleys, where flowers and fragrance follow its steps,—when a voice, unheard by man, is teaching every little bird to sing, in every bush, the praises of God,—when a beneficent power, perceived only in its effects, is diffusing life, and light, and liberty, and joy throughout the whole creation,—at this enchanting season, who would not love the country? Who would choose the filth, and confinement, and tumult of the town? I love the country; I love the month of May; yet the month of May, when the country is most beautiful (had I freedom of choice), I would spend in London. And why? Because in *that* month the assemblies of the people of God are most frequent and most full. Then, too, the tribes from the provinces go up to worship there at the anniversaries of various institutions. The bliss and festivity of nature in spring are but faint and imperfect resemblances of the enjoyment of those seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Most High."

At this period Campbell and Coleridge were delivering Lectures on Poetry at the Royal Institution; and to each Montgomery devoted an evening. While he naturally wished for an interview with both his gifted brother

poets, Miss Benger was more particularly anxious that he should hear and meet the former:—

*Miss Benger to James Montgomery.*

"I am sorry I have to inform Mr. Montgomery that Mr. Campbell does not lecture till Wednesday se'nnight, but I trust his stay will be prolonged beyond next week.

"Mrs. Blackburne depends upon seeing you on Wednesday next, *at* or before eight o'clock. I shall then hope to prevail upon you to name some evening for visiting Kenton Street. Mr. Campbell desires me to present his best respects to you. You *must* stay to hear him lecture. I shall be much mortified if you do not allow me to have the pleasure of bringing you together. My pleasures are so few, that I cannot patiently submit to forego this agreeable anticipation. My mother begs to offer her best remembrance.

"Believe me, sir, very respectfully,

"Your obliged,

"L. BENGER.

"Monday, 18th,
"3. Kenton Street, Brunswick Square.

"P.S.—I think I can *promise* you a pleasant evening if you will visit Kenton Street; but at Dr. Blackburne's, 25. Henrietta Street, Cavendish Square, I can *ensure* you a most agreeable party."

*Montgomery:* I heard Campbell deliver one of his Lectures on Poetry at the Royal Institution before one of the most brilliant audiences I ever saw assembled on such an occasion." *Holland:* "Was Lord Byron present?" *Montgomery:* "He did not make his appearance that evening, and I was disappointed in the expectation I had entertained of seeing him. You could not look upon the company without recognising some individual eminent in rank, or distinguished in literature: but the moment the lecturer began, I had

no longer a disposition to regard the celebrities about me. He read from a paper before him; but in such an energetic manner, and with such visible effect, as I should hardly have supposed possible. His statements were clear, his style elegant, and his reasoning conclusive. After having wound up the attention of his hearers to the highest pitch, brought his arguments to a magnificent climax, and closed with a quotation from Shakspeare, in his best manner, off he went, like a rocket! This lecture was the more striking, from its contrast with that delivered by Coleridge the evening before from the same rostrum. In the former case, the lecturer, though impressing us at once, and in a high degree, with the power of genius, occasionally accompanied the most sublime but inconclusive trains of reasoning with the most intense — not to say painful — physiognomical expression I ever beheld; his brows being knit, and his cheeks puckered into deep triangular wrinkles, by the violence of his own emotions. But, notwithstanding the frequent obscurity of his sentiments, and this 'painful' accompaniment, when the lecture closed, you could not say you had been disappointed." *Everett:* "What were the subjects of the lectures?" *Montgomery:* "Campbell's was on the French and English rhyming tragedies, and Coleridge's on Greek tragedy." *Holland:* "I think Campbell has the best *managed* powers of any living poet, and exceeds Coleridge as much in taste as he is inferior to him in the deep pathos of pure genius." *Montgomery:* "I believe that is about the fact: whatever Campbell undertakes he finishes; Coleridge too often leaves splendid attempts incomplete: the former, when I heard him, seemed like a race-horse, starting, careering, and coming in with admirable effect: the latter resembled that of one of the King's heavy dragoons, rearing, plunging, and

prancing in a crowd, performing grand evolutions, but making little or no progress." *Everett:* "It is to be regretted that Campbell has not published his lectures." *Montgomery:* "I believe they have been purchased by Colburn, and are to appear in the 'New Monthly Magazine.'"* *Everett:* "What is your opinion of his 'Specimens of the British Poets?'" *Montgomery:* "His Essay on English Poetry, comprised in the first volume, is admirable; his selections are good, and some of them rare; and you are sorry that his critical remarks are so brief on several of the authors of his 'Specimens.' I was requested to review the work for the 'Eclectic,' but declined the task." Montgomery was introduced to Campbell at the close of the lecture, as he had previously been to Coleridge, who pressed him to spend a day at Highgate.

In company with Parken, he visited the Exhibition of the Royal Academy; his principal source of gratification being the busts by Chantrey, which formed a main attraction of the Sculpture Room. The sculptor himself was in high spirits, having just returned from Edinburgh, commissioned to execute those statues of Lord Melville and President Blair which at once sustained and increased his reputation. The interest which Montgomery always evinced in the rising fame of his friend appears in the following paragraph, which was written at this time:—

"Mr. Chantrey's ascent up the steps of fame has not been long or laborious; we warn him, however, not to loiter by the way, but steadily to persevere for the attainment of that excellence which may rescue modern sculpture from the character of mediocrity, and challenge competition with the

* They did appear in that periodical.

works of Phidias, of which such exquisite specimens have been recently brought to this country by Lord Elgin; not, we hope, to make the British artist despair, but to increase his capabilities, and animate him to greater and more successful exertions."

Of the value of these celebrated remains of ancient art, it is hardly necessary to add, nobody thought more highly than Chantrey himself.

That Montgomery's muse should have slumbered amidst the incessant hum, changes, and interruptions of a short and busy visit to the metropolis, would have been less surprising, than that it should not have been, at least temporarily, awakened with the impressions produced, as we have seen, by the poet's attendance at public meetings. He, however, wrote, at the solicitation of a friend, an "Occasional Ode on the Royal British System of Education." It was sung by Braham, at the anniversary meeting held in the Freemason's Tavern, May 16. 1812, and consisted originally but of four stanzas; that which at present stands first, and is so remarkable for its boldness, being afterwards added on revision:—

"The lion, o'er his wild domains,
Rules with the terror of his eye;
The eagle of the rock maintains
By force his empire in the sky;
The shark, the tyrant of the flood,
Reigns through the deep with quenchless rage;
Parent and young, unweaned from blood,
Are still the same from age to age."

These lines, with some others, were once repeated by the Rev. Robert Newton, in his speech at a Missionary Meeting, where their author was present.

"I thought," said Montgomery to us, "I had met with the lines somewhere before, and was quite charmed with them for the moment. At length I recollected they were my own, when I was not a little ashamed of the interest I had seemed to manifest in them. But though this incident diminished the pleasure, yet I must say that, with Newton's fine voice, and manner of delivery, I never, till that moment, felt the full effect of my own poetry on my own ear. A similar mistake occurred to me once, with a piece published without name, and with a new title, in Todd's paper. I dashed into the middle of it, and said to myself, 'I must have seen this before;' and by glancing at the commencement, I found it was my own 'Monody on M. S.' There is frequently a confused recollection of former impressions and sentiments, for which we can scarcely account for a time, and which often leads us to attribute to another what really belongs to ourselves."

This is well expressed by Sheridan:—"Faded recollections float in the fancy, like half-forgotten dreams, and the imagination, in the fullest enjoyment, becomes suspicious of its offspring, and doubts whether it has created or adopted."

He received from some anonymous admirer a note suggesting a poem on the "May Meetings;" the singing of the "Ode on Education," by Braham, having, it appeared, originated the idea. Another individual, dating from Plymouth, strongly recommended the "Mediterranean" as the subject of a poem, and citing, in favour of it, the well-known remark of Dr. Johnson. His unknown correspondent, at the same time, asked him to render into English, sonetto xxviii. of Petrarch, "*Solo e pensoso i più deserti campi*," &c. With the latter request, it appears, he presently complied.*

* Works, p. 296.

# CHAP. XXXIX.

## 1812.

LETTERS TO PARKEN.— HIS DEATH AND CHARACTER.—LETTER TO MR. AND MRS. IGNATIUS MONTGOMERY.—LETTER TO ASTON.—MONTGOMERY'S VISIT TO BUXTON.—THE "PEAK MOUNTAINS."—LETTER TO THE REV. IGNATIUS MONTGOMERY.—LETTER FROM SOUTHEY.—LORD MILTON AT SHEFFIELD.—LETTER TO ASTON.

On Montgomery's return to London from a visit to the Taylors at Ongar in Essex, he found his friend Parken rather indisposed in health, but parted with him cheerfully, and, on his own arrival at home, wrote to him as follows:—

*James Montgomery to Daniel Parken.*

"Sheffield, June 10. 1812.

"My dear Friend,

"This is the fifth letter I have written to-day (you would tell me it is not yet written, but it will be before you can tell me so, Mr. Special Pleader!) and, therefore, I promise you it shall be a brief one. Indeed, I have nothing to say except that I am once more in Sheffield, but not yet settled into myself; neither the whirl of mind, nor the nervous agitation of my frame, have yet been wearied into rest. Since I left home in the beginning of May I have never yet had one hour of sober thinking, or sober feeling,—I mean every-day thinking and feeling,—thinking and feeling that do not wear and tear out life itself, with alternate

joys and torments, reveries or trances. O how I long for *quietude!* after all the excesses and exhaustion of such intercourse as I held in London with spirits of fire, and air, and earth, and water,—for spirits of each of these descriptions I encountered,—my heart and soul desire nothing so earnestly as peace in solitude. In town I had too much society; at home I have too little; four weeks of the former have therefore so unsettled me, that it will require four weeks of the latter to bring me back to my lonely habits—I mean to the enjoyment of them, in the easy, regular, unconscious exercise of them. Certainly I saw and heard a great deal in London, but it was like seeing the hedges, or hearing the nightingale (as I actually did), out of a stage-coach window, the former in such rapid retrograde motion, that no distinct picture of them could be retained, the notes of the latter so interrupted or deadened with the lumbering of wheels, and the cracking of the whip, that they were caught like the accidental tones of the Æolian harp, when the wind will neither play on it, nor yet let it alone, but dallies with the strings, till they tremble into momentary music, instantly dissolving, and disappointing the ear that aches with listening. I wonder if you will understand this; I am sure I do; and yet I doubt whether I can make any one else. But all the sights and sounds of the last month were not thus ineffable and evanescent to me. Your kind looks are still smiling upon me, and your kind words still heard in my heart. I was often dull and distracted in your presence; but it was 'my weakness and my melancholy' made me so; for towards the latter end of my visit, I was much indisposed, and most so when I had most occasion to be otherwise. My brother and sister, to whom I have written, will tell you more of this, and of my wretched journey home. I am, however, I thank God, greatly recovered, and on a review of the whole, I am unfeignedly grateful to the Father of all mercies as well for what I suffered as what I enjoyed during my stay in the metropolis and its neighbourhood. When you see Doctor or Mrs. Gregory, remember me most kindly to them; I shall never

forget the delightful hours I have spent in their society: every blessing of time and eternity be theirs! . . .

"When I spoke of the Saints at Woolwich, I did not mean to exclude your interesting sister, of whom I saw too little, but enough never to forget her, for her own sake as well as for yours. The letter which you wrote to me before I left Sheffield, but which, though well directed, missed me on the wing, was very welcome and seasonable when I got home again. I thank you for all its precious contents, for all that it says, and a thousand times more, for all that it means: none but a friend could have written it, and none but such a friend as you would have written its loveliest passages. My best respects to Mr. Williams, if indeed he will accept them; but remember, if I disappointed him on Monday morning, the fault, or rather the mistake, was yours; so see that you make my peace with him again. For yourself accept my warmest good wishes and prayers.

"I am your affectionate friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"D. Parken, Esq."

Having waited till July, in the expectation of again hearing from his friend, he wrote what he called "a peevish letter, full of complaints." That letter we have not seen, but we have before us Parken's reply to it; in the opening sentence of which he says:—

"My dear Friend,—I am sure you are unwell, because I think you are unreasonable. Not but you had a right to expect a letter from some one—if not from all your accused friends; but that you upbraid us a little hardly for having inadvertently concurred in neglecting you."

The writer in a postscript says he was about to start on circuit; and after mentioning the places where he might be found by letter, closes with the date of his intended return to London. "I saw," said Montgomery, "that I had wounded my friend's feelings,

though I had no such intention, and I immediately wrote to him to say so."

*James Montgomery to Daniel Parken.*

"Sheffield, July 11. 1812.

"MY DEAR FRIEND,

"My letter of last Monday must have been a very foolish and wicked one, to have merited such an answer from you as I have just received. Indeed I *do* reproach myself for having written it, whatever were its contents: of these I remember almost as little as you wish me, and nothing that ought to have wounded my best friend in his most amiable feelings. What evil spirit, your enemy and mine, prompted me to express my disappointment at not having heard from any of my London friends, since my return home, in terms of such coarse and cruel raillery as to frighten you into the belief that I was in earnest, even to the letter of my reproaches, I know not; for his punishment may he feel, till he repents and makes atonement for his sin (if atonement be possible), all the pain that you felt on reading my letter, and I on reading yours! If it was my own evil spirit (and I know no other on whom to lay the blame of my faults, though you seem to hint at another), I will not retract one iota of my malediction, though I hope that this sheet will prove my contrition, and be accepted as a peace-offering by offended friendship. I am sure that my language must have been as harsh and unkind as you understood it, for you could not be mistaken; yet I am equally, nay, more sure, that if it was so, my hand was unfaithful to my heart, and wrote down words which conveyed meanings to your mind that came not, and could not come, from mine. I was unwell when I wrote that letter: I am so still. I was perplexed with a multiplicity of business-cares and bosom-anxieties, which hurried and pressed upon me that morning; and I wrote to you and another friend in such haste and confusion, that I scarcely knew what I said at the time; I might have been astride of a windmill-sail in full motion, and only

able to snatch the moments of its ascension for writing such thoughts as you may well imagine would be thronging through my head in the giddy and horrible whirl. When I took up my pen to write to you, I intended only to scribble a line to request you to forward the books immediately, as I was really in want of some of them; but it seems that some mischievous impulse carried away my hand, with a speed and fury as difficult to stop as the windmill-vane in revolution, so that, instead of a gentle tap to rouse your slumbering attention, it struck blows which would have been fatal to any mortal friendship, but have only proved the immortality of yours. Immortality! O my friend, shall you and I ever be immortal in *one* place? It is one of the bitterest anticipations of that world of darkness and despair, which 'rolls not within the precincts of mercy,' that the society of friends will be no comfort there. If I must have my 'portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone,' may all whom I have loved on earth be for ever separated from me! But I will draw back my hand from touching this distracting chord, on which hang my most mysterious sorrows, lest you should think me indeed possessed by another evil spirit than my own. . . . . I told you, or intended to tell you, that I had been much indisposed ever since my return: my illness was not the consequence of fatigue in travelling; it had seized me with violent pains, in the forenoon, before I set out, and I was in misery, and fear that made that misery torture, when I got into the road, with night and a long jolting journey before me. Since my arrival in Sheffield, though I have neither been confined to my bed nor my room, I have not been in a healthy state of feeling for an hour. Colds, coughs, pains in the chest, *numbness of brain*, bowel-irregularities, and nameless and numberless hypochondriacal plagues, successively, partially, or altogether, have afflicted me; and at present I expect no early relief. But the wounded spirit and the breaking heart, these are the hardest to bear with resignation—resignation to the will of God. Not that I feel so much over personal suffering, or repine at my temporal lot,

but with these disorders of my perishing frame, there comes so much confusion, and doubt, and darkness, and desolation into my soul, that the powers of my mind seem paralysed, the affections of my heart withered, and every stream of hope or comfort passed away. Then, when I can neither think, nor write, converse, or even pray with connection and self-possession, I do indeed deem myself smitten, forsaken of God, and afflicted, — worthily smitten, forsaken of God, because I will not, cannot, come to him, — and afflicted, because I perversely, and yet inevitably, refuse the consolations of his Spirit. O what a mystery of woe, what a mystery of iniquity is this! God deliver me from it, or carry me through it, as his wisdom and his goodness shall see fit! You will, perhaps, ascribe my recent relapse into this melancholy state to the interest and anxiety which I must feel in the welfare of the person by whom I sent my last unfortunate letter. It is true that I have had to suffer and sympathise with her and for her, in a very difficult situation in which she had ignorantly placed herself, during my visit to London, in which I found her on my return to Sheffield: but believe me, if my heart had no other, no heavier weight of sorrow upon it, than I must always bear on her account, I should be a happy man in comparison with the wretch that I am: my griefs lie deeper than disappointment of affection; it was those griefs that prevented me from ever yielding to the impulse of that affection, and, unless they are soon allayed, must for ever unfit me for the sweetest pleasures of this life. Surely you were not hurt by the levity of spleen which prompted me, at the time of writing, not to give you the address of the bearer of my letter. I had no worse motive for this, certainly, than that the communication would have been of no service either to you or her, as you will be convinced when I tell you she was going to Mrs. H* * * *'s, at Hampstead. There, if you have either desire or occasion to introduce yourself, at any time in the course of two months, by mentioning my name you will be kindly received by both the ladies. It occurs to me, that the expression which

grieved you most in my mad letter must have been the last of all the last words of it, in which, if I recollect rightly, I told you that you need not write with the books. I am afraid this postscript was strangely worded; yet it was intended only to urge the sending off of the books without *any* delay; but I dare say the heterodox language in which my letter was involuntarily written, belied my feelings and outraged yours. Pardon me, I beseech you. I, who am the most injured of the two, by my own fault, will not forgive myself till I am assured of your forgiveness. I will lay down my pen till Saturday next."

"July 18. 1812.

"After the lapse of a melancholy week, I take up my pen to close this letter, by saying, that I have determined to try the Buxton baths after the 29th of this month, so that if you have occasion to write to me soon, let it be in the interval, or not till after the 14th of August. Will you have the goodness to call on my brother Ignatius, in the early part of the week, and mention my determination, and tell him that I shall write before I leave Sheffield? I received both his affectionate letters; the second, though the shortest, was the most welcome, as it brought the happy tidings of a new blessing to our family, and a new jewel to his crown of rejoicing, which I pray God may shine in it eternally.

"Amidst all these bodily and mental troubles (*I beg you not to say anything to alarm Ignatius or Agnes on my account*), you will yet be desirous to know something about the poem, which already has been a source of so much anxiety and fear to you, lest it should dishonour me. I have made very little progress since my return; all the fire, and imagination, and feeling that once warmed and quickened me in poetical composition is repressed, if not extinguished: gleams in the darkness, sparks in the ashes, hopes amidst despondency, will break forth at times; and of these I avail myself as well as I can. The work *does* go on, and that is all I can say of it. How shall I thank you for all your

kindness to me! I am content to be unworthy of it, but I cannot bear to appear ungrateful, because I am not.

"Your sincerely affectionate friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"D. Parken, Esq., 13. Old Square, Lincoln's Inn."

This letter never reached the hand of him for whom it was intended; and instead of the anticipated rejoinder, the poet was startled, on opening a note from Mr. Beddome, Dr. Gregory's brother-in-law, and dated London, July 24., to read,—

"I sit down for a few minutes to send you a piece of intelligence that will make your heart ache—our friend Parken is no more! He died last night at Aylesbury, after a confinement of ten days. You may have heard that he and [his brother] William were overturned in a gig, as they were journeying on the home circuit, by which accident D. P.'s ancle was dislocated."

Then followed a detailed account of the symptoms—at first favourable, and then, from the shock on a weak physical system, changing to a fatal termination. "Ah! my dear sir, where shall we look for such another, now he is gone? such a brother? such a friend? I need not describe him to you, who knew him so well." Nor need we attempt to describe Montgomery's emotions on the reception of these sad and unexpected tidings.

*Everett:* "Was Parken, in your opinion, a decidedly religious character?" *Montgomery:* "I am persuaded *he was:* our intercourse, both personal and epistolary, convinced me of this: but I much regret that my last letter did not reach him, because it contained some allusion to the rest and the communion of saints." *Everett:* "His general health must have been feeble, to suffer a fatal shock from such an apparently slight cause."

*Montgomery:* "It was so: and his mind must have been at the same time in a singularly morbid state, judging from the unusual tone of his letter to me. Have you read the specimen of his poetry which I lent you?" *Everett:* "Yes; it is smooth and elegant: but there is a want of power — of imagination. The writer has been more indebted to his academical studies than to his poetic feeling. His verses are those of a scholar, and indicate less a fervid temperament than a cultivated mind." *Montgomery:* "You are pretty nearly correct: and that is the character of a large proportion of the current poetry of the present age. Miss Seward's clever verses, so much praised at one time, are now never read; and almost the same may be said of Dr. Darwin's rhymes, brilliant and full of science as they are. Hodgson*, deservedly admired as he is, will never be popular; his poetry being, as you say, that of *the school.* There are many clever and even elegant versifiers, who would never have been heard of if they had been, like Burns or Bloomfield, brought up at the plough." *Everett:* "Had you ever any opportunity of judging of Parken's abilities as a practitioner at the bar?" *Montgomery:* "No; I believe he was considered rather heavy as a speaker; but he had hardly entered the arena, and his department of practice was not one in which the glare of eloquence was necessary: had he lived he would doubtless have made a respectable figure in his profession. He was remarkably ready with his pen; and spoke with great fluency and propriety in conversation." *Everett:* "Your friendship and correspondence with Parken must have formed an interesting and — to yourself, at least — happy period

* Rev. Francis Hodgson, author of the "Friends" and other poems; the translator of Lucien Bonaparte's "Charlemagne," &c.

of life." *Montgomery:* "The pleasure of the intercourse was mutual."

With the death of Parken, Montgomery's career as a reviewer may be said to have terminated, and therewith a distinct chapter of his literary history.

### *James Montgomery to the Rev. Ignatius and Mrs. Montgomery.*

"Sheffield, July 27. 1812.

"MY DEAR BROTHER AND SISTER,

"You will immediately forgive my fortnight's silence at a most interesting and critical juncture, when I inform you that I fully expected that on Monday and Tuesday last you would have heard both *from* me and *of* me, by our friend Parken, as I despatched a letter on the Saturday preceding to meet him on his return from the circuit, and requested him to inform you that I continued so weak in body, indeed so much indisposed, that I had determined to try the Buxton waters this week, but that you should hear from me before I left Sheffield. Had I not relied upon this, assuredly I should have written at that time directly to you, to congratulate you with gladness of affection on the birth of the dear little stranger that has been sent amongst us to add to our number and our felicity. Anxiously and earnestly have I longed for this intelligence, and thrice welcome it was, though it came when I was in darkness of spirit and debility of frame, that made life burthensome and death dreadful to me. Do not, I intreat you, as you love me, as you desire your own peace, and as you trust in God, our common Saviour, do not be alarmed at this acknowledgment of my state of mind and body, which has been the same in a greater or less degree ever since my return to Sheffield. I am not despairing; God is only humbling me under his mighty hand, and I bow to the chastisement and kiss the rod that smites me, as I lie in the dust of self-abasement and self-abhorrence at his feet. 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' is my prayer; and that prayer will be answered

in his good time, and in his own manner. O how mysterious are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! My dear friend Parken *now* knows, though we know it not, nor can we comprehend it, why *he* was thus unexpectedly removed from us, and he acknowledges both the wisdom and the mercy of that awful visitation. Three letters this morning brought me the intelligence of his premature death,—not premature, I trust, for I am persuaded that he was prepared to meet his God, though neither he nor we expected the summons would be sent so soon. My heart, which these sad tidings rent, has already been flowing through two letters to friends on this distressing subject, and I will not —indeed I cannot without aggravated misery to myself and unnecessary infliction upon you — dwell longer on it here. My letter did not arrive in time for him either to read or hear read; therefore my message to you could not be delivered. I thank God for his merciful preservation of my dear sister in the hour of sorrow,—but her sorrow has been turned into joy. O may she live to bring up the dear child thus happily given her, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and may that child live to be the comfort of its parents by fulfilling all their hopes to see it grow in stature and in favour both with God and man! I cannot object to any name for the sweet infant, which those who love it best shall choose for it; but I thought —indeed I made myself almost sure—that it would be called *Mary Agnes*,— were not both its grandmothers Maries, and is not its mother Agnes? I know no reason, at the same time, why it should not be Henrietta, or why I should not love my new niece as well by that name as those I have mentioned,—'the rose by any other name would smell as sweet.' By whatsoever name it shall be called in due season, I have already placed its lovely little image in my heart amongst my warmest affections,— and the inscription may be added any time. O how would it rejoice me to meet you at Buxton, as I met you last year, and spend, as I propose to spend, a fortnight there! I have told you the best and worst, as Ignatius desires that I would.—Pray for me, dear brother and

sister, that my faith fail not:—indeed it is hard tried at times. I am well pleased that John James has consented to abdicate his throne, and that it is so much better filled by one who is so much less than he. Kiss both the deposed king and the new-crowned queen from Uncle James. Kindest regards to Robert and his dear family. Farewell!

"Your faithful and affectionate brother,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Rev. Ignatius Montgomery,
"Nevill's Court, Fetter Lane, London."

*James Montgomery to Joseph Aston,*

"Sheffield, July 28. 1812.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"....Procrastination is the mother of every sin of omission of which I am daily guilty, and by which my life has run so much to waste, that I may almost say the summer is past, and I have scarcely begun to sow for the harvest. This, alas! will apply equally to my temporal and spiritual concerns. I am always a day behind time, and I fear sometimes that I shall be so at the last, and thus lose eternity. Many melancholy considerations that press upon my mind, and fill my heart with sadness just now, lead insensibly into this train of reflection whenever I take up my pen to write to a friend,—which indeed is as seldom as possible; for I have been for two months past nearly unfit either for society or solitude, for correspondence or meditation. The month of May I spent in London, from whence I returned very ill, and then followed such a series of colds and nervous affections as I never experienced before with so little intermission; for I have always been subject to these, though hitherto with lucid intervals that admitted both of hope and enjoyment. Now, however, the evil spirit seems to possess me entirely, and the Harp of Sorrow that once so sweetly soothed the grief it could not cure, has almost lost its power to charm. In this state of debility and depression, both of mind and body, I am induced to try the air and the waters of Buxton. I expect to set out for that Bethesda to-morrow, and stay about a fortnight, earnestly praying, and amidst doubts and fears that assail and per-

plex me at times, still trusting that He who gave me life will yet bless me with a moderate degree of health, and 'spare me a little longer, that I may recover strength before I go hence and am seen no more.' Forgive the tone of anguish and complaint this letter breathes; I write so seldom to you, that when I do write it ought to be a cordial from my heart poured into yours, lightening the one, and refreshing the other. I wish I could thus cheer and solace you; but, wanting comfort myself, how can I rejoice, by my language and sentiments, the soul of my friend? Yet I trust you need the kindness of sympathy less than I do, and that you have happiness enough and to spare, by looks, and words, and deeds of charity to friends so poor in spirit as I am. I know you will bear with me, and therefore I freely trouble you with the overflowings of my heart, which is truly full of bitterness; yet do not be alarmed for me: only imagine, and you will imagine truly, that all those hypochondriacal and constitutional infirmities which have 'grown with my growth, and strengthened with my' *weakness*, are now upon me in more than their usual measure. These will accompany me to my grave, I know; but whether they will hasten my journey thither is only known to Him who, for the wisest, best, and most merciful purposes, permits them to afflict me. . . . . With kind remembrance to Mrs. and Miss Aston, and your venerable father,

"I remain your faithful friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. Joseph Aston, Manchester."

It is remarkable that this letter contains no allusion to the recent death of Parken; and equally so, that the writer never mentions the fact of his being or having been an "Eclectic" reviewer. Aston at once and very kindly pressed his friend to visit Manchester, suggesting that "the smiles of welcoming and obliged friendship" might prove as salubrious as the tepid springs of the Peak. One may smile at the mention of another item in the comparison urged in favour of the city of spindles, as an exorcist of the "Dæmon

Hypochondriasis," viz.—" a grand review of the military force of the district, horse, foot, and artillery!"

To Buxton the poet went; and from thence, on the 9th of August, he wrote to decline Aston's invitation; adding,—

"I have no heart for exertion, and no spirits for pleasure; otherwise, it would be a great satisfaction to me to meet you once more in this world, and to meet you where you would be seen to the best advantage—in the bosom of your family. Surely we *shall* meet again in time; but when and where cannot be foreseen—O may we meet in eternity, and never part!"

In the same letter he says:—

"This day I have witnessed the consecration of the church at this place by the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry. It is an elegant and very commodious edifice, founded by the late noble Duke of Devonshire, and capable of containing, with the gallery, nearly a thousand persons. It was exceedingly crowded on this occasion. When the spire, which I understand is to be fifty feet above the roof, is completed, it will be a most beautiful object to the surrounding country; and it can no longer be said of this gay place—as it literally might have been said heretofore—that the house of God was nearly the meanest building in it."

But the best part of the letter was a line of P.S.—

"I am better in health, and more cheerful than when I came hither, I thank God."

*James Montgomery to William Roscoe.*

"Yates' Lodgings, Buxton, July 29. 1812.

"DEAR SIR,

"Two years ago when I was at Harrogate, I was induced by my friendship for Mrs. Hofland to solicit your recommendation of Mr. Hofland as an artist, to be named an Associate of the Liverpool Academy. Your generous com-

pliance with my request has left me without an excuse to avoid troubling you again, on the application of one of my best friends, in another academical case; at the same time I pledge my word that this shall be the last favour of the kind I will ever ask of you; and had I anticipated the probability of being a second time put upon trying the extent of my influence with you as a patron of art, I would have made this vow yesterday morning instead of this evening, and thus escaped the dilemma I am now in, and from which neither my esteem for a most excellent man, who has been a true friend to me these nineteen years past, nor my high respect (however mistaken my estimate of them may be) for the talents of his daughter, will permit me to attempt to escape in any other manner than fairly facing my way through it, and casting myself and the cause of the young lady at once upon your liberality, by telling you the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as far as I know and believe it. Miss Harriet Rhodes of Sheffield being about to send some pictures to the Liverpool Exhibition, her father understanding you to be one of the Patrons of it, and knowing that you had honoured me as a poet with much condescending partiality, has written to me requesting that I would call your attention to them, so far as to look at them on their arrival, and if you think them worthy of such a distinction, and have the power to secure it, to get them placed in a *good light.* This phrase fully explains the sum of my petition and theirs; you know well how much painters value such an incidental advantage, and imagine, one might suppose from the stress they lay upon it, that their success depended as much on the light in which their works are seen, as on the merit of the execution of them. This, therefore, though you will probably regard it as a trifling favour to confer, is no small one to ask on the part of the young lady, and the merit of your service to her shall be rated after *her* estimate of its worth and not according to yours. I have only to add that I consider you as much at liberty to judge for yourself, and to act upon that judgment solely, as you would have been had your attention been excited towards these humble pro-

ductions by their own merit, whether that be great or small. I have not seen them to my knowledge, for Mr. Rhodes in his letter to me does not mention the subjects: when you have seen them I know that you will do justice to them, to the fair artist, and to yourself; you will never put them in any light but that in which you think they may be seen to the best advantage; if they be bad, which I hope they are not, you may safely set them in a bad light, since in such case the worse it is, the better for them. It is very hard work at any time to write on subjects which one does not understand, but it is harder still when Time is urgent to be gone, and must not be lost any more than he can be stayed, to have to grub in the dregs of an inkstand, and despair almost of finding enough of these to blot a due portion of paper to no purpose on such an occasion, but to show our ignorance, or our impertinence as I fear I am doing and cannot help it. There is no remedy for me to-night. This letter must go, and I have neither ink nor time left to fill the sheet. You perceive by the date that I am at Buxton; hither I am come the victim of innumerable ills both of mind and body, arising partly from constitutional infirmities, but principally originating in cold caught when I was in London, the miserable effects of which in pains and debility have hung upon me ever since my return, at the beginning of last month. I was very much indisposed with cold that evening I had the pleasure of seeing Mr. W. Roscoe at Mr. C. R. Aikin's; he was so good as to promise to call upon me at my brother's in Fetter Lane, but though I have no doubt he was as good as his word, his performance was not the fulfilment of his promise; this I am sure was no fault of his, but only my misfortune, for I saw Mr. M'Creary, of London, lately, who told me that Mr. W. R. was called out of town earlier than he expected. Will you give him my best regards, and say that I am more sorry that we did not meet again, than that he did not call on me, for had he called it might probably have been in vain, as I was seldom at home except early in the morning or late in the evening, and frequently out of town at Woolwich, Hampstead, &c. Indeed I attribute my present indisposition to

excessive hurry, anxiety, enjoyment, and agitation of spirits during my visits among friends and strangers in that immense metropolis, where I spent four weeks. I propose at present to stay a fortnight at this place, in hope that the air and waters of Buxton will restore me to some degree of comfortable bodily feeling, and quiet and meditation in this wild land of mountains bring back some of my lost energy of mind. I can say no more at present, or I would gladly report progress on my 'World before the Flood,' but on that subject I hope fully to explain my present views of it, if I have not an opportunity of sending you the copy when it is completed, before it goes to press. That cannot be, as far as I can foresee, earlier than next spring. It has gone on, it is true, but it has gone on heavily for the last three months. I think, however, now I see my way through it, and really it is a great point gained towards success when an author clearly understands himself: my first views of the subject were very obscure, and Dr. Aikin has a copy of the poem executed after them; my next were a little brighter, and you saw the work that arose out of these; the third epoch of my thoughts will surely produce something better than either. Farewell, and accept once more my sincere thanks for your past kindness, and believe me

"Your ever grateful friend and servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"William Roscoe, Esq., Liverpool."

Two of his Sheffield friends, Mr. T. A. Ward and Mr. Ebenezer Rhodes, met the poet on his departure from Buxton at the far-famed village of Eyam, whence the party proceeded to Monsal Dale and Miller's Dale, following the picturesque course of the Wye to Bakewell, where they spent the night; and, the next morning proceeding to Rowsley at the confluence of the Wye and the Derwent, they walked along the pleasant banks of the latter river by Stoke Hall, and over the moors to Sheffield.

A durable memorial of this visit to the salutiferous springs and striking scenery of Buxton, and its vicinity, exists in the stanzas entitled the "Peak Mountains,"* every line of which indicates the pensive tone of the poet's mind at this time.

*James Montgomery to the Rev. Ignatius Montgomery.*

"Sheffield, Sept. 4. 1812.

"My dear Brother,

"With your last letter I received three others, all announcing the death of the best friend I ever had, or hope to have, on earth. I was very ill at the time, and preparing to set out for Buxton. This severe and sudden stroke laid me lower in the dust than I remember to have been at any time before, often and miserably as I have been prostrated there amidst the ruins of my hopes. I went to Buxton on the Wednesday following, and you will have learned already, from the annexed stanzas, in what a forlorn and suffering condition I found myself there. I stayed away three weeks; and since my return, I thank God, my unfailing friend and helper in every time of need, I am growing stronger and healthier every day. My strength and health I consecrate to him who gave them to me for his own glory and for my enjoyment. . . . I was in private lodgings at Buxton, on the hill, above the Crescent. I often thought of you, and commemorated our few walks by going them over again. My rambles, however, extended further than your eyes themselves ever ventured to travel on those wild and melancholy hills, from some of which, notwithstanding, I enjoyed transporting prospects. But the chief companion of my walks was the spirit of my dear lost friend, with whom I held most sweet and mournful converse in my thoughts, where he was almost hourly present. I am persuaded that he is rejoicing in his happy release from this world of temptation and trial, in which it pleased the Lord to shorten the day of his pilgrimage and sorrows. You will lament with me, for your

* Works, p. 289.

own sakes, as I do for mine, that so excellent and amiable a companion should be so early removed, while you and your dear Agnes were only beginning to know his worth. . . . Both Agnes and you, as well as Henry [Steinhauer] were much beloved and esteemed by him; and had he been longer spared, you would have been more and more delighted with him. His talents and his heart were too much concealed by his extreme modesty in every thing that concerned himself. I never knew a man so truly and quietly disinterested. . . My kindest love to Agnes: the same to Robert and his family.

"Your affectionate brother,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"The Rev. Ign. Montgomery, London."

The following letter recalls the pleasure with which he whose hand now transcribes it received from their author a copy of the exquisite verses alluded to.

*James Montgomery to William Roscoe.*

"Sheffield, Sep. 8. 1812.

"DEAR SIR,

"I staid at Buxton about three weeks, and returned thence much recovered in health, and relieved from a weight of despondency that almost paralysed the powers of my mind. Some of the melancholy that haunted my imagination, while my corporeal frame was sinking into dust under a malady the most distressing that wrought upon my nerves like the influence of an evil spirit, I have endeavoured to express in the first of the foregoing stanzas, but the lyre which I began to touch with the hand of fear, 'recoiling from the sound,' grew sweeter and louder as I struck it more boldly, while I gradually forgot my sorrows and myself in the glory and grandeur of a scene, that to the unpurged sight seems dreary and monotonous, but to the eye opened, if I may dare to say so, 'in the visions of the Almighty,' and beholding him in every thing, grows fairer and more wonderful the longer it is contemplated. Such at least was my experience, and the air and exercise that I took on the Peak-Mountains, I am per-

suaded contributed not more to my restoration to health of body and mind, than the sublime and delightful emotions that were awakened and prolonged in my bosom as I walked on their sides, or on their summits, felt myself between heaven and earth, and holding communion with both in my solitary walks. Forgive this strong language, which to some would seem madness, and to others vain babbling, but to you who understand it by the sympathies of a truly poetic spirit, it will not be uninteresting. Accept the verses, which very imperfectly delineate the sentiments and the objects that inspired them, in token of my esteem and gratitude for much kindness and indulgence shown to me and my productions on former occasions. With my best remembrance to your family, I am, sincerely and respectfully,

Your obliged friend and servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"William Roscoe, Esq., Allerton Hall, near Liverpool."

*Robert Southey to James Montgomery.*

"Keswick, Oct. 7. 1812.

"MY DEAR MONTGOMERY,

"You have here the second [he had previously received the first while in London] book of 'Pelayo,' or, as I must learn to call it, 'Roderick, the last of the Goths.' I have more pleasure in transcribing it for you than I shall have in throwing it before the world; for though I cast my bread upon the waters in full assurance that it will be found after many days, it is with a feeling something like that I should have in setting acorns. In all the prospect, the churchyard enters into the foreground. There is another thought connected with publication, which tends as much to humiliation as it may seem to savour of pride: of the thousands who will read my poem, some for the pleasure of finding fault with it, but far, very far more undoubtedly for the pleasure it will give them, how very few are there who will really be competent to appreciate it! and how frequently have I had occasion to remember the point of Yriarte's fable, 'Bad is the censure of the wise — the blockhead's praise is worse!' But in sending to you what has

been produced with passion, and elaborated with thought, I know that you will recognise whatever is true to nature; and that thus I shall have my reward. The figure of Spain may require a note to point out what a Spanish reader would instantly perceive,— the badge of the military orders, the castles and lions of Castille and Leon, and the sword of my Cid.

"Your 'Peak Mountains' make me repine that you did not come where you would have found subjects as much superior in loveliness as in grandeur. You have managed a very difficult stanza with great skill. The two last lines are but equal to one alexandrine, therefore objectionable. You have been aware of this, and so managed your accents that they seldom read as one. The poem is in your own true strain: it has the passion, the melancholy, and the religious ardour which are the elements of all your poetry. One of these elements, delightful as it is in such combination, I would banish from you if I knew what, like Tobit's fumigation, could chase away dark spirits. Oh that I could impart to you a portion of that animal cheerfulness which I would not exchange for the richest earthly inheritance! For me, when those whom I love cause me no sad anxiety, the skylark in a summer morning is not more joyous than I am; and if I had wings on my shoulders, I should be up with her in the sunshine carolling for pure joy.

"But you must see how far our mountains overtop the Derbyshire hills. The leaves are now beginning to fall — come to me, Montgomery, as soon as they reappear, in the sweetest season of the year, when opening flowers and lengthening days hold out to us every day the hope of a lovelier morrow. I am a bondsman from this time till the end of April, and must get through, in the intermediate time, more work than I like to think of: through it, if no misfortune impede or prevent me, I shall get willingly and well; for I know not what it is to be weary of employment. Come to me as soon as my holidays begin. You will find none of the exhausting hurry of London, but quiet as well as congenial society within doors; and without, every thing that can elevate the imagination and soothe the heart.

"I heard of you in London from Miss Betham, who saw you at Mrs. Montague's. Thank you for inquiring about the Missionary Reports. If there are only the two first numbers [qy. volumes ?] out of print, I will send to London for the rest, and have a few blank leaves placed at the beginning, in which to write an abstract of what is deficient, whenever I can borrow a perfect copy.

"My next poem will have something to do with Missionaries, and will relate to the times and country of Eliot, the apostle of the Nituencer Indians, and the man who translated the Bible into the most barbarous language that was ever yet reduced to grammatical rules. The chief personage is to be a Quaker, and the story will hinge upon the best principles of Quaker philosophy, if those words may be allowed to exist in combination. The object is to represent a man acting under the most trying circumstances in that manner which he feels and believes to be right, regardless of consequences; and in my story the principle of action will prove as instrumental at last to the preservation of the individual, as it would be to the happiness of the whole community if 'the kingdom' were 'come.'

"Do not let your poem languish longer. I, who want spurring myself, would fain spur you on to a quicker progress. I advance in these things with a pace so slow and so unlike the ardour of former times, that I should suspect more changes of temperament and loss of activity than eight-and-thirty years ought to bring with them, if I did not find or fancy a solution in the quantity of prose labour that falls to my lot. Time has been when I have written fifty, eighty, or a hundred lines before breakfast; and I remember to have composed twelve hundred (many of them among the best I ever did produce) in a week. A safer judgment has occasioned this change; still time may have had some share in it. I do not now love autumn as well as spring, nor the setting sun like the life and beauty of the morning. God bless you!

"ROBERT SOUTHEY.

"Mr. James Montgomery, Sheffield."

On the 9th of October, Lord Milton visited Sheffield as a candidate for the representation of the county of York, on which occasion he delivered an address in the "Square." Parliamentary Reform was the main topic on which his lordship was expected to give his opinion. To this measure, in the popular acceptation of the terms, he was more than suspected to be adverse, and, therefore, as was expected, many of his auditors listened with some dissatisfaction. Being pressed by an individual, in the name of several freeholders, explicitly to avow his sentiments on this subject, he did so at once, and in a most frank and manly manner. Notwithstanding that Montgomery differed from his noble friend on this question, he observed, "If Lord Milton's patriotism be not *pure* gold, it is at least *sterling;* there is but a grain of alloy in it: would that such were the currency of the whole realm. . . . Are all his merits and all his services to be forgotten for one hereditary taint of corruption, which, perhaps, runs in the very blood of nobility?" He attended the meeting, and published an abstract of the speech in his "Iris" the following week; and so faithfully had he described the proceedings, that several hundred copies of the paper were circulated by Earl Fitzwilliam. When the final struggle for reform came, the nobleman who had appeared to hesitate on this occasion was one of the foremost and firmest of his order in advocating the measure.

*James Montgomery to Joseph Aston.*

"Sheffield, Nov. 12. 1812.

"My dear Friend,

". . . I will in three words answer your inquiry concerning my poem—I mean three hundred!—but they shall be as few as possible. It is very strange indeed, if I have never mentioned it to you. I have had the poem of

the 'World before the Flood' three years in my hands, during which time it has been written once completely, and then broken up and half written on a new plan, and a second time remodelled. Many vexations and interruptions I have suffered in the progress of it, and have sometimes laid it aside for months in despondency. At present I begin to think I may finish it on its present plan in the course of a few weeks, and then I shall immediately set about revising it for the press. With regard to the subject, I doubt whether you can form any guess at all even of my general drift in it; and nothing can explain this to you but a perusal of the poem. I have some hopes and many misgivings about its success—I have no sanguine expectation, certainly. The 'Flood' is *not* the catastrophe. I am glad that your report of Canning's Manchester speech has not only done you credit, but may do you good.

"I am, truly, your obliged friend,

"J. MONTGOMERY.

"Mr. Joseph Aston, Manchester."

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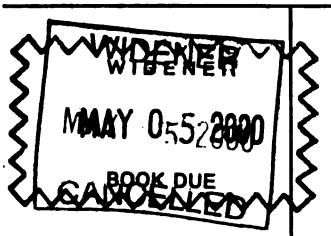

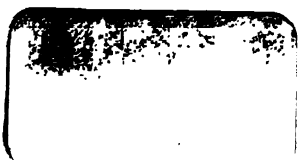
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